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MARGARET CECIL;

OR,

I CAN, BECAUSE I OUGHT.

Ballantyne Press.
BALLANTYNE, HANSON AND CO.
EDINBURGH AND LONDON

Warne's Star Series.

MARGARET CECIL;

OR,

I CAN, BECAUSE I OUGHT.

By CATHERINE D. BELL,

AUTHOR OF "ALLEN AND HARRY," "AN AUTUMN AT KARNFORD," "GEORGIE AND LIZZIE," "MARY ELLIOT," ETC.

New Edition.

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PREFACE.

THE fortunes of Margaret Cecil are intended to exemplify the power of a strong will struggling against adverse circumstances. Even to the most highly-favoured, life is always a battle with evil and sorrow, and it is well that in their youth they should learn how to endure bravely as well as meekly.

If "Margaret Cecil" should help one young reader to "do her duty" faithfully "in that state to which it has pleased God to call her," it will not have been written in vain.

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MARGARET CECIL.

PART I.
MARGARET IN FRANCE.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

It was a lovely summer evening. Little Margaret Cecil had run down, as she was so fond of doing, to the cottage of Norah Chantal, her mother's foster-sister, to sit for an hour or two with her, telling her all her adventures of the by-gone day, or, better still, listening to Norah's interesting stories. On this particular evening, Norah had been telling her a true story, an account of the efforts a poor boy in the lower ranks of life had made to educate himself. Margaret was kneeling on a low stool at Norah's feet, her arms clasped upon her knee, and her eyes eagerly fixed upon her face.

"And what then, Norah? what then?" she exclaimed impatiently, when Norah paused for a moment. "What was the end? He went on working and

working, and studying and studying so hard, until he had learned enough, and made enough, to be able to go to college; and then he became a great and a learned man, just like what Arthur will be some day. That was the end, was it not?"

"No, Margaret, that was not the end," said Norah. "Poor James' father died, and his weak, delicate mother, and the younger children, were left quite dependent upon James' earnings. A rich hosier in that town who had long observed and admired James' unwearied industry, and who knew well the straightforward, upright character of the whole family, offered to take him for a book-keeper. He was to give him a handsome salary, and he promised to take him into partnership in the course of five or six years, if he gave him satisfaction."

"And James consented," cried Margaret in a disappointed tone. "Oh, Norah, I wish you had not told me this story. I liked the beginning so much, and now, I am so disappointed. I don't care about him now if he could be persuaded to give up his fixed purpose so easily. It is such a noble thing to be determined to go on, and to persevere steadily and resolutely whatever difficulties are in the way."

"A determined will in the path of duty is indeed a noble thing," said Norah emphatically; "but I can see nothing noble in resolving to persevere in our own plans and purposes, without considering the wants and feelings of others."

"But, then," said Margaret eagerly, "they were right and good plans and purposes. His was not a mere desire to please himself; it was a noble desire to learn, to know, to understand."

"A desire to save his mother from toil, from anxiety, perhaps from starvation, was nobler still," was Norah's grave answer. "Ah, Margaret, think what a mother is; think of all her unwearied care and watchfulness; think of her deep, unselfish devotedness, of her tender, warm love, and say if James did not act rightly, nobly, when he used his strong will to enable him to overcome his own strong passion for study, in order that he might procure for his mother that comfort, that freedom from anxiety and toil, which her love so fully deserved from him?"

Norah spoke with simple heartfelt earnestness. She was not thinking of her own love to her own child, though that was as deep, as true, as devoted, as any mother's could be. But her thoughts had gone back to her own early days, to the dear mother whose grave was in a distant land, but the remembrance of whose affection and tenderness was ever fresh in her daughter's heart.

The tears started into Margaret's eyes.

"My own dear Mamma," was all she said, and she hid her face upon Norah's knee.

There was silence for a few minutes. At last Margaret looked up suddenly—

"You are right, Norah," she said, "and I would

have done as James did. Indeed, I would," she continued eagerly as she observed a slight smile on Norah's face. "If it were to serve Mamma, my will would be strong enough to overcome every desire, every passion. It would be like the elephant Arthur told us of, breaking down the stone wall as if it had been a fence of rushes, and dashing through the jungle as if it had been reeds."

"And yet," said Norah, "you show every day that it is no stronger than that poor kitten, which cannot by any means gnaw through those feeble threads of worsted with which you have confined it under the chair."

Margaret laughed, and ran to release the little prisoner, while she asked Norah what worsted threads her will could not break through.

"The feeble thread of a slight disinclination to learn to embroider," was the grave reply.

Margaret blushed.

"Oh," she said, "that is such a little thing. I mean it would do so little good."

"It would please your mother, Margaret. And, besides, my child, if you cannot direct and restrain your will now, when it is young and comparatively weak, how do you expect to do it when it grows stronger? Your elephant broke down the stone wall, and dashed through the thick underwood at its master's command, to save its master's child from drowning, because it had learned to love that master and to obey

his voice. But if it had been wandering up to that time untamed and uneducated, it might with equal strength have broken down the wall and dashed through the brushwood, but it might then have been in order to tear that same child in pieces, or to trample him to the ground."

"Oh, Norah, how can you speak so?" cried Margaret, much shocked, and a little angry. "I never could allow my will to wound or vex dear Mamma, however strong it might be."

"And yet you do grieve her almost every day, when you oppose your will to hers, and refuse to comply with her wishes. It may be a *little* grief that you cause her, because you are only a little girl, and it is only little opportunities that you have of either grieving or pleasing her; but while your will refuses to be controlled in these little things, you have no right to suppose that you either can or will control it in greater things hereafter, when it will have grown more determined and be more difficult to restrain."

For some time Margaret did not speak, and Norah, assured by the expression of her countenance, that she was convinced of the truth of what she had said, did not press the argument any farther.

"Still," she said at length with much emphasis, "I do like a determined character. I never could fancy a hero who was not decided, who could be influenced by every one around him."

Philippe, Norah's husband, had entered the cottage

while Margaret was speaking. He was amused with her earnest tone, and said, smiling—

"How do you manage then, my child, to make a hero out of Arthur?"

Norah looked up quickly to check the ill-judged question; but it was too late. Margaret had caught its meaning, and she turned indignantly to Philippe:

"Arthur is not weak or changeable," she said angrily. "His body is weak, and his health delicate, but his mind is strong, and he is everything that is good and right. You are a bad man to say that he is not, and I could hate you for it, if you were not my dear, good Norah's husband;" and so saying she ran hastily out of the cottage, as if anxious to get out of the offender's presence.

Philippe looked vexed.

"I ought not to have said it, knowing how tenderly the child loves her brother."

"And if she loved him less," said his wife gently, "I think you should still less have said it. Brother and sister love is too sacred a thing to be trifled with. One would be sorry in any way to hurt or weaken it."

"Yes, yes, you are right," was his good-humoured reply. "I should not have said it. But I can never see those children without wishing they could change places. Poor, gentle, timid Arthur, is half a girl, and Margaret would make a noble boy."

"I hope she will make a noble woman," said Norah earnestly. "Her heart is as warm as her temper. It

is beautiful to see her deep, devoted love to her mother; and her unselfish, generous affection for Arthur, in spite of his father's unjust partiality towards him."

"*Unjust!*" repeated Philippe warmly. "You may indeed call it that;—why, Norah, I believe he positively dislikes that poor girl."

"He certainly does not love her," Norah answered sadly. "I do not think he had any affection for Arthur either, until he discovered that the boy had an extraordinary genius for mathematics, and for all the studies of that kind in which he used himself to excel."

"Affection!" again repeated Philippe with honest indignation. "He has no affection for anybody, cold, hard-hearted man that he is! It makes my blood boil to think of his mean selfishness. He must have his wine, and his fruit, and every delicacy he fancies; his valet to wait upon him, and journals to amuse him; and his poor wife and children may want even the necessaries of life for all he cares. Poor, gentle, heart-broken lady, how much she has to suffer!"

"She will not have to suffer long," said Norah in a low, agitated voice.

"My poor Norah! how dearly you love her," said Philippe tenderly, as he observed her fast-falling tears.

The conversation was here interrupted, as their boy's voice was now heard singing as he came home through the wood, and Norah hastily rose, and retired into the inner room to wipe away all traces of tears, and be ready to give him her usual smiling welcome.

She did indeed love her foster-sister dearly, and it was only natural that she should do so, for they had been brought up together, as if they had been sisters in blood. Mrs. Cecil's father, Sir Horace O'Brien, was an Irish baronet of ancient family and large fortune. Lady O'Brien died in giving birth to her little girl.

Very near the castle of Sir Horace, was the small but comfortable farm-house of Mark Callaghan. His wife had met with much kindness and sympathy from Lady O'Brien during a time of severe affliction, and as soon as she heard of her death, she hastened to the castle to see if she could be of any use, and to inquire about the infant. She found that the poor baby had been almost forgotten in the sorrow and dismay consequent upon the mother's death. Her own little Norah was then only two months old. All a mother's compassion was awakened at the sight of the helpless, neglected child, and she obtained permission from the housekeeper to take it home and nurse it with her own for a week or two, until Sir Horace was able to think and to give orders about it.

Weeks passed before he could bear to hear any allusion made to the cause of his wife's death; and, in the meantime, Mrs. Callaghan had become so attached to her little nursling, that she was quite willing to agree to Sir Horace's proposal, that she should take the entire charge of his little girl for the next two years, during which time he intended to travel on the Con-

tinent. His only other child, a son by a former marriage, a young man of eighteen, was to accompany his father; but he could not take the infant, and he had no female relation to whom he could entrust her.

This arrangement was only to have lasted for two years, but eight passed away before any change was made in the little Margaret's mode of life. During that time, Sir Horace had been living sometimes in London, sometimes in Dublin, and sometimes in Paris, but had never been able to make up his mind to stay for any length of time at the castle where his wife had died. He came to see his little girl once or twice a year, and she always looked so healthy and happy, he had such confidence in the good sense and attention of Mrs. Callaghan, that he was always glad to gain her consent to keeping her little charge for another year.

When she was eight years old, he formed an establishment for her at the castle, and engaged an elderly French lady to act as mistress of the household, and governess to the little Margaret. But still the foster-sisters were not separated. Margaret was so broken-hearted at the idea of losing her sister, as she always called Norah, that Sir Horace persuaded her parents to allow her to reside with her at the castle, and to share in the instructions of her governess.

These instructions were after all not very valuable, for the good-natured old Madame knew very little herself. The girls had been taught to read and write by Mrs. Callaghan. The master of the village school came

to the castle three times a week to teach them arithmetic, grammar, and geography. Madame taught them to speak and read French, to play a little upon the guitar, and to embroider beautifully. And that was the sum of their acquirements.

But the lessons of sound practical piety, of earnest right feeling which they received in their daily visits to their mother at the farm, were worth all the rest put together, and were such as many a highly educated mother could not have given them.

In this way time passed quietly on till the girls were nearly eighteen, when Sir Horace died, and Margaret was left to the sole guardianship of her brother, Sir Charles. This was a sad change for her. Although she had seen little of her father, yet he had always been most kind and indulgent towards her, most anxious to make her happy, and to gratify her every wish. Sir Charles was a cold, stern, proud man. A very bigoted Catholic, he had often remonstrated with Sir Horace on the impropriety of suffering Margaret to associate so intimately with such devoted Protestants as the Callaghans were; and his first act of authority was to command Norah to leave the castle, and to carry Margaret back to Dublin with him.

As it is the younger Margaret Cecil's own history, and not her mother's that I propose to give you, I shall conclude in few words. Persecuted by her brother on account of her religion, peremptorily commanded by him to accept proposals of marriage made

to her by a man she could neither love nor respect, she was too easily induced to listen to the persuasions of Arthur Cecil to consent to a private marriage. He was a young Englishman of good family but ruined fortunes. He was, as Philippe had said, a cold-hearted, selfish man; but he was very clever, had extraordinary skill in reading character, and in appearing to be whatever was most likely to please those with whom he associated. A much more clear-sighted person than poor Margaret might have been deceived by his pretended zeal for the Protestant religion, and sympathy with her for the persecutions she underwent.

Although still a young man, he had spent a large fortune, and run deeply into debt; and his object in marrying Margaret was to save himself from ruin by means of her handsome fortune. In this, however, he was disappointed. Marrying without her brother's consent, Margaret's only portion was a very small annuity, and Arthur's indignation on discovering this when too late for remedy, by inducing him to cast off all disguise, revealed only too soon to his poor wife the selfish, hard character of the man to whom she had united herself for life.

They could not remain in Britain on account of his debts, and after a few months' wandering, had settled in a wretched half-ruined chateau in a most retired district in the south of France.

Here Mrs. Cecil's health and spirits must have failed altogether, if it had not been for the presence of

her faithful Norah. She had written to tell the Callaghans of her marriage, and although she did not even to them make any complaints about her husband, yet it was easy for affection like theirs to discover, from the general tone of her letters, that she was very unhappy. Mrs. Callaghan went up to Dublin to get information about Mr. Cecil's character and prospects, and heard enough to convince her that her worst fears were too well founded. Neither she nor Norah could endure the thought of their dear Margaret being left alone in her misery, and as soon as they received certain intelligence of her abode, Norah left her own happy home, and went to join her foster-sister, determined never again to leave her, so long as she could by any means, or in any way, be of use to her.

You may imagine with what heartfelt gratitude and joy Mrs. Cecil welcomed her. But not so her husband. Norah's devoted affection for her foster-sister was a perpetual reproach to his selfishness, and he feared that she might incite his meek, gentle wife, to rebel against his numerous acts of tyranny and his mean appropriation of the far larger share of their small income for the gratification of his luxurious tastes.

If he could, he would have refused to consent to Norah's becoming an inmate of their house. But he had no reasonable excuse for doing so, as Norah declared herself both able and willing to take upon her all the duties of their only female servant. For more than three years she remained with them in this capa-

city; and by her hearty, cheerful discharge of every task, by her cleverness, economy, and contrivance, she added greatly to the comfort as well as the respectability of the establishment. It was true she had little practical knowledge of the duties of a cook, a housemaid, or washerwoman, for during her life at the castle she had been the constant companion of the young lady, and had never associated with the servants. But from her mother she had early learned the invaluable habit of giving her whole attention to whatever she was engaged about, of doing all she did heartily, and with her whole mind. From the time she had first entertained thoughts of going to France, she had spared no pains to acquire such knowledge as would fit her for the situation she saw she must occupy; and having heard that Mr. Cecil was fond of good dinners, and apt to be very cross when this liking was not gratified, she delayed her journey for a few weeks in order that she might go to Dublin and take lessons in the art of cookery, and had really become a first-rate cook.

Indeed, her excellence in that department, which particularly interested him, was the only thing which induced Mr. Cecil to permit her to remain with them so long. And in spite of it, he certainly would have dismissed her sooner than he did, if her prudence, and command over her temper, had not enabled her to avoid giving him any reasonable cause for doing so. But the warm, devoted love for her poor foster-sister, which

had made her willing to leave friends. home, and country for her sake, enabled her to submit calmly to every provocation and insult, and even to repress the strong feelings of indignation which were aroused by his treatment of that dear sister.

After she had been with them for nearly two years, Arthur was born, and while it increased her cares and labours, it also increased her desire to remain with her mistress, and, consequently, her carefulness to avoid offending her master.

At the time of little Margaret's birth, about eighteen months after Arthur's, Mrs. Cecil was very seriously ill, and in her anxiety about her, Norah forgot her usual prudence, and for once gave vent to her feelings of honest anger and contempt for Mr. Cecil's mean selfishness in grudging his poor wife some little luxury which her condition really called for. He took immediate advantage of this opportunity, and dismissed her from his service with as much loftiness of manner as if she had been the well-paid and highly-favoured servant of a comfortable establishment. Alarmed for the consequences to her mistress, were she forced to leave her at such a time, Norah condescended to use the most humble entreaties to be allowed to remain. But all she could gain was a permission to delay her departure until Mrs. Cecil was well enough to look after her successor. And this was granted more from a consciousness that his own comfort was concerned in Norah's being allowed time to instruct the raw country girl whom

he had engaged to take her place, than from any anxiety about his wife's feelings.

But although Norah was no longer to be the inmate of her house, Mrs. Cecil was not altogether deprived of the comfort of her presence and sympathy. Long before this time Norah's good qualities had won her the heart of a young Frenchman, who lived near them, and whose kind feelings had led him often up to the chateau to offer assistance and service of various kinds for the poor, delicate, heart-broken looking stranger lady. Philippe Chantal was not unworthy of Norah. He was like herself a zealous member of the little Protestant church which had for many generations existed in this valley. And his straightforward manly character, his humble, earnest piety, and his warm heart, were peculiarly adapted to gain her affections. But hitherto she had been steady in her refusal to leave her mistress. Now, however, that this objection was removed, she frankly accepted his renewed proposals, and only left the chateau to become the mistress of Philippe's neat cottage, with its pretty garden and luxuriant orchard.

And, certainly, the change was a favourable one for her. Philippe Chantal was very well off in the world. Cottage, garden, orchard, and two or three sunny grass fields were his own property, besides a goodly flock of sheep and goats. And Philippe's pleasant temper, and unselfish kindness, offered a great contrast to the morose, discontented Mr. Cecil.

Although Mrs. Cecil could not but miss her faithful

attendant very much, she was too unselfish not to rejoice in her happiness, and was only thankful that she was still so near her, that she could still apply to her for that sympathy, assistance, and advice, which Norah was always so ready to give. Inferior in rank, Norah was the superior in almost everything else, even in education, for she had profited more by the scanty opportunities of learning which had been afforded to them in common. Her clear judgment, her strong good sense, and calm decision of character, rendered her peculiarly fit to help and counsel the gentle, affectionate, but somewhat weak Mrs. Cecil, while, at the same time, her tenderness of heart and true delicacy of feeling prevented her from being ever presumptuous or harsh.

In nothing did Mrs. Cecil derive more benefit from the counsel and aid of Norah than in the training of her children, particularly of Margaret. Arthur was such a remarkably quiet, gentle boy, that his mother's excessive indulgence did him perhaps little harm. But Margaret was very different. Bold, active, and strong both in mind and body, with a determined will, a proud temper, and a high and fearless spirit, she probably would have grown up an unamiable, unfeminine woman, if it had not been for Norah. Norah was the first to see the defects of her character and their probable tendency. It was she who drew Mrs. Cecil's attention to them, representing to her with affectionate though humble earnestness, the duty of endeavouring to remedy them, and the danger of suffering them to increase. Nor were her

arguments unavailing. In spite of Mrs. Cecil's natural weakness, she had, owing to her careful nurse's good instructions, a very strong sense of duty. Although she was incapable of pursuing such a regular systematic course of training as Norah would have adopted, she was often able to insist upon obedience and submission from the wilful child, with a measure of gentle firmness which could scarcely have been expected; and Margaret's enthusiastic love for her mother gave all her instructions a force and efficacy, which they might not otherwise have had.

It was to Norah's personal and direct exertions, however, that Margaret owed most. Taking advantage of the child's affection for her and love of her society, she lost no opportunity of teaching her to use her strong will to subdue her own passions and inclinations, and to govern herself; of seeking to implant in her mind a conscientious regard to duty, a strong desire to know, and do, what was right in all circumstances. With Margaret's strong, warm affections, it would have been comparatively easy at any time to induce her to submit for the sake of those she loved, but Norah could not be satisfied with such a mode of governing her. In all her teaching, her aim was to give her the habit of unwavering, unqualified submission to the will of God, both in doing and suffering, and a settled belief that His will ought to be the sole standard of right and wrong, the constant guide of her conduct. From the time that Margaret could understand anything, she

had been accustomed, in every little question of duty, to hear Norah say, with a simple, earnest seriousness peculiar to herself, "What does God wish us to do in this thing?"—had been accustomed to feel that God's commands *must* be obeyed, whatever it might cost. Norah was careful never to weary the children with long discussions about religion; but she was also prayerfully anxious that no day, no visit to her cottage, should pass without at least a word or two of instruction upon that all-important subject, and she was scrupulously careful never upon any occasion to give them low or worldly motives for anything she wished them to do, or to leave undone, but to refer everything to the necessity of pleasing God; and her care and instructions were greatly blessed to both children, but particularly to Margaret, who, it must be owned, was her favourite.

At the time when my story begins, Margaret was between ten and eleven. As her outburst of indignation against Philippe testified, her temper was still very proud and impatient. But she was earnest and persevering in her attempts to control and subdue it. She was singularly candid and conscientious in her judgment of her own character and conduct, singularly unselfish and generous, and, considering her natural disposition, I might almost add, singularly docile and obedient. It was very seldom that a direct command from Mrs. Cecil met with anything but the most ready and cheerful obedience; although, I must confess, that she occasionally practised a kind of playful, coaxing

opposition to her gentle mamma's wishes, where the proposed task was very distasteful.

Of this kind was the embroidery work which Norah alluded to. Mrs. Cecil and Norah had attained to great perfection in this art under the tuition of their old French governess, and of late years they had practised it to considerable profit. Their kind friend the pastor disposed of their work, and procured them fresh materials and new patterns in his yearly visits to some friends at Lyons.

As Mrs. Cecil's slender income was only for her own life, and as she was perfectly aware, from the rapidly declining state of her health, that her life could not be a long one, she was extremely anxious to teach Margaret an art by which she might at least partly support herself. But, hitherto, Margaret's great repugnance to the occupation had made her resist all her mother's gentle expostulations.

On the evening of her talk with Norah, however, Margaret made a firm resolution to overcome her distaste to the task, and promised herself never again to offer the least opposition to her mamma's proposed lessons, however tiresome she might find them.

Early the following afternoon she came down to the cottage in the highest glee.

"Ah, Mistress Norah," she cried, "poor little kitten has done wonders to-day. Once, twice, thrice, has she broken through every thread or cord that could confine her, and rushed out to do her duty."

"Has she, indeed?—I am very glad to hear it," was Norah's answer, with a smile full of kindly interest and sympathy.

"Yes, indeed, she has; and I have come down for only five minutes to tell you all about it. I must not stay longer, because your good little Pierre has come to help me to make that south border a little respectable. He and I have formed such grand plans about it, and I must not leave him to work them all out alone. So now for the story.

"The first time kitten was called to come forth, it was for such a little thing, she almost thought it was not worth the trouble of breaking through the barrier. If it had been to catch a mouse, it might have been different. But a fly, a poor, little, common fly—not even a nasty, buzzing blue-bottle—it really seemed not worth while. And she curled herself comfortably up, and had almost fallen asleep again, when she suddenly remembered how this same fly had teased her dear mistress only yesterday morning, buzzing about her face, settling upon her hand, and tormenting her in fifty ways. So up she jumped, out she sprang in spite of all the threads, caught the fly, and gobbled it up in a moment."

"And what was the fly, and what were the threads?" asked Norah, joining involuntarily in Margaret's gay laugh at her fanciful simile.

"Oh! the fly was only a certain habit which a certain little girl has of fidgeting about in her chair when

she is learning or saying her lessons, kicking her feet against the table, rubbing her nose, or pushing back her hair at every difficult question. And the threads were the dislike which the same little girl has to sit still. No very great thing, you see, Norah. It did not deserve to be called anything but a fly, did it? Only, it annoys Mamma, and dear, quiet, orderly Arthur, so it was quite right to catch it and gobble it up.

"But the next really was a mouse, and a great big mouse too. *Such* a long row of that horrible satin stitch. And the threads of dislike, of disgust, at the task were so many and so strong. Ah! they were not worsted, I assure you, but pack-thread, waxed pack-thread, or whip-cord. Yes, they were whip-cord."

"But you got through them?"

"O yes, and did my satin stitch beautifully, Mamma said. Only, dear Norah," she continued with a deep sigh, "I do hate it so. You say that habit makes everything easy. Do you think it will ever make me like that tiresome work? Do you think the whip-cord will be any weaker to-morrow?"

"I am not sure that to do a thing twice can be called a habit, my dear little Maggie," said Norah kindly. "But don't think too much about it beforehand. Tell me about the kitten's third adventure?"

"Oh, it was not a weak little kitten that time. It was a lion or a tiger, or at least a great dog like Bruno. And it was a strong prickly hedge it had to go through; and the thorns tore its skin and scratched its face.

But don't ask me about it; I ought not to tell you; and I must really go to Pierre."

Margaret spoke in a hurried, excited tone. She rose hastily from her seat, turning away her flushed face from Norah's anxious and affectionate gaze. Norah understood her. She guessed rightly that the third difficulty had reference to some act of injustice from Mr. Cecil; and her heart was full of thankfulness to see what good fruit her instructions on this point were bringing forth, in those feelings of duty and reverence, which restrained Margaret from complaining of her father, even to her. She changed the conversation immediately, asking the little girl about the plans which she had been making for the improvement of the south border.

Margaret described them with all her usual animation, and concluded by saying—

"I am so anxious to make it very nice, because Mamma likes to walk there in the stormy days of winter; it is so warm and sheltered. And just now, when the hot weather makes her feel wearied and disinclined to walk far, she often sits there on the seat under the chestnut-tree."

These last words seemed to awaken some painful train of ideas in her mind. She looked anxiously and wistfully in Norah's face while she repeated—

"The weather has been *very* hot, oppressively hot, you know, Norah?"

Norah assented, but it was in a grave, sad tone.

Margaret went towards the door, then looked back

at Norah with the same wistful, anxious expression. She seemed unwilling to go away, and yet unwilling to speak the thoughts which were passing through her mind. At last she came close up to Norah's chair, and hiding her face on her shoulder, she said in an agitated manner—

"I don't like to ask, dear Norah, I don't like to think about it. Oh, Norah, surely it is *only* this oppressively hot weather that makes Mamma so weak and wearied?"

Norah's only answer was to put her arms tenderly around her, and press her close to her heart. Margaret understood her at once. She burst into a passionate flood of tears. Norah did not attempt to restrain her. She showed her affectionate sympathy by her own tears, by repeated fond kisses, and now and then a gentle, compassionate, "My dear Margaret," "My poor child."

After crying bitterly for some time, Margaret's tears ceased. Suddenly she disengaged herself from Norah's arms, and said almost angrily—

"Do not pity me so much. Why do you call me 'poor child?' Mamma is not so ill; she will get stronger when the cold weather comes back; I know she will. It is all the heat that makes her so weak; and she works too much at that hateful embroidery; but I will do it for her. I will take such pains to learn to do it quickly and well. I will go home at once, and work another long row; and then, when I can do all the work, and she can rest more, and go out more, you shall see that she will get quite strong again."

"God grant that she may," said Norah affectionately,

though sadly. But at any rate, my child, you are right to resolve to do all you can to help her. You cannot relieve her from all anxiety of mind, but you can at least take care that you never cause her any by disobedience or carelessness."

"I will, I will, Norah! I will never again do anything to grieve her; I will never again refuse to do anything she wishes, or grumble at any task which she gives me."

"The Lord bless you, my darling, and help you in all things to do His will," was all that Norah said as Margaret left the cottage.

They were judicious, well-chosen words. Had she detained Margaret to remind her that in her own strength she could do nothing, and to exhort her to seek strength from the Lord, Margaret would, in her excited state of feeling, have become impatient, and could not have attended to her. But these few words, spoken with so much earnestness and affection, caught her attention at once, and suggested to her mind all that Norah wished. They recalled, too, all Norah's kindness and love, and her heart smote her for the way in which she had received her expressions of compassion and sympathy.

With Margaret, to become conscious of a fault and to acknowledge it, were almost simultaneous. Two minutes had not elapsed since she left the house, ere she was again at Norah's side, throwing her arms round her neck, and whispering—

"Forgive me, dear Norah, for being so ungrateful and angry when you pitied me just now. It is only that I cannot bear anything that seems like saying that dear Mamma is very ill. But you know, Norah, that I love you, and feel how kind and good you are."

"I do indeed, my darling," said Norah, kissing her fondly, "and I think our little talk will do us both good. I am sure, dear, that you are in earnest in your resolution to spare your Mamma all trouble and anxiety, and I am also sure that God will help you to do so."

"Oh, indeed, Norah, I am in earnest," said Margaret.

"But you will remember, my child," said Norah, gently detaining her for a moment, "that you must not be self-willed in your efforts to be of use. You must submit to do as your Mamma bids you, and to help her in the way she points out, even though you think you could do more in some other way. Be as careful not to tease her by persisting in doing too much, as in refusing to do enough."

Margaret looked thoughtful, and Norah continued—

"I would not have said this just now, dear, when you are feeling so much, lest I should appear to discourage you, if I had not thought that Mamma would rather see you out working in the garden this fine afternoon, than sitting at home to do another row of satin stitch as you proposed, and if I had not feared that in your zealous attempts to help her, you might grieve her by opposing her wishes."

Margaret remained silent for a few minutes, and then said thoughtfully—

"Well, Norah, I shall try to remember your advice and to follow it, only you know it is difficult to be content to do nothing when one feels anxious to make a great effort or a great sacrifice."

"So it is, dear; but you are making a sacrifice of your own will when you refrain from working because your Mamma wishes it, as well as when you force yourself to work when she bids you."

"So kitten will still have some threads to break through," said Margaret laughing. "Well, I must run away now, and if I can tempt Mamma and Arthur out to watch Pierre and me at our labours, that will always do some good."

CHAPTER II.

CARES AND SORROWS.

As Margaret had been in earnest in forming her resolution, so was she steady and persevering in keeping it. It was beautiful and touching to see her anxious watchfulness over her mother's health and comfort. Learning with the ready tact of true and deep affection to read her thoughts and feelings, and to know what would give her pain and pleasure, to please and help her, to save her from every trouble and annoyance, became the little girl's first object in life. Her slightest wish met with the most prompt compliance. However irksome the duty imposed might be, Margaret not only refrained most scrupulously from a single murmuring word, but was also most careful to banish from her countenance every expression of discontent, and to look as cheerful as if the task had been of her own choosing.

Nor was it by the strict performance of her own duties alone that she sought to help her mother. No pains, no sacrifice, were spared to shield her from annoyance from others. With a boldness which sometimes

surprised herself, she frequently contrived to draw her father's fits of ill-temper upon herself, and so to ward them off from her mother. Their only servant was a kind-hearted, pleasant-tempered, but very thoughtless girl, and Margaret seeing how much Mr. Cecil's temper was irritated by her forgetfulness of orders and want of punctuality, watched over her to remind her of her duties at the proper time, and to assist her in those difficulties which her own carelessness had caused.

Whether it was that Margaret was really able to be of material service to her mother, and to lighten her burden of sorrow and anxiety, or whether it was from the more wholesome coolness of the weather, I do not know, but certainly Mrs. Cecil seemed to revive considerably as the heat of summer passed away. Her appetite and strength in some measure returned. She was again able to accompany her children in their walks, again able to interest herself in their little plans and amusements. It was, however, a very temporary revival. As the winter advanced, her strength again began to fail, and to the experienced eyes of Norah, it seemed to decline all the more rapidly for this slight recovery.

But Margaret did not see this. With all the sanguineness of childhood, to see her Mamma a little better, was to believe that all danger was past, and constantly occupied with her, or for her, she failed to remark those rapidly increasing signs of weakness, which told too plainly that her life must be short.

It was Mrs. Cecil herself who undeceived her. They were sitting alone on a winter evening in Mrs. Cecil's bed-room. It had been one of those close, oppressive days, which we sometimes see even in the depth of winter. Mrs. Cecil had felt more weak and unwell than usual, and had gone early to bed. She had long wished to speak to Margaret upon the subject; and feeling that no time was to be lost, she took advantage of their being left quite alone, and endeavoured with the utmost tenderness to prepare her child's mind for the sorrow which too surely awaited her. Margaret heard her at first with as determined incredulity as if her fears had never been awakened.

"Oh, Mamma," she said hurriedly, "you are not so ill. You are only tired to-day because it is such an oppressive day, but that is no bad sign. I have felt tired myself to-day. You are much better than you were some time ago. You are only jesting, dear Mamma, and say this in order to enjoy my happiness when I see you quite well again."

"Jesting, Margaret! Ah, my child, do you think I could jest upon what is such bitter sorrow to you?" replied Mrs. Cecil in a tone of such mingled love and sadness, as brought instant conviction to Margaret's mind of the truth of her words.

"But, Mamma, Mamma, you will not die?" she cried wildly, burying her face in the bed-clothes. "My own Mamma, you will not go away, and leave Arthur and me all alone. Think how desolate and dreary this

house will be with no Mamma's room to go to; think how desolate and dreary our lives will be with no Mamma to comfort and advise us, to love, and——."

"Hush, hush, my child. Oh, Margaret, do not break my heart," interrupted the poor mother in a faltering tone, sinking back upon her pillow, completely overcome by the thought of her children's desolate condition, left to the sole care and guardianship of their selfish, cold-hearted father.

Margaret looked hastily up. Her mother's pale cheeks and closed eyes recalled her composure at once. She had seen her faint before, knew what remedies to use, and proceeded to apply them with astonishing calmness and presence of mind. Mrs. Cecil had become only partly unconscious. She soon recovered, and was able to open her eyes, and smile upon her anxious child.

"You are better, dear Mamma," whispered Margaret, kissing her, "and I am so sorry to have grieved you. I will not cry any more. I will not speak in that way again, and you will not think any more about it. See, I will sit down here, and tell you all that Arthur and I did when we were out. And I will amuse you, and we will forget all these melancholy things."

"No, my child," said Mrs. Cecil gently. "It is wrong to try to forget any sorrow which our Heavenly Father sends upon us. Bring His Blessed Book, my love, and let us read together some of the precious

words of comfort which He speaks to His sorrowing children."

Margaret went for the Bible, and seated herself upon a chair by the bedside. Before she began to read, Mrs. Cecil offered up a few simple earnest words of prayer, that God, for His dear Son's sake, would send His Holy Spirit to be with them at that time, to open their hearts to understand and believe His words, and to enable them to submit to His will, whatever it might be.

And the mother's prayer was answered. The wild tumult of grief in poor Margaret's heart was stilled. She read the passage which her mother had chosen, the first few verses of the forty-third of Isaiah, in a calm steady voice. Never before had she felt so solemnized in reading the Bible; never before had she so realized God's presence, or felt so truly that they were His words that she was reading, and were spoken to her.

When she concluded, Mrs. Cecil repeated slowly and emphatically, "'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.'"

"Never forget that precious promise, my child," she said; "when you pass through the waters of affliction, ever remember that the Lord has promised to be with you to sustain and comfort you, and to bless and sanctify all your trials to you, so that they may make

you grow in grace and conformity to His will. When you are called upon to pass through the waters of difficulty and discouragement in the way of duty, never forget to ask the Lord to fulfil His own word, and to be at your side, enabling you to hold on your way steadily and perseveringly, however dark, or cold, or deep, these waters may be.

"We do not know, my darling, what your future life may be. But this we know, and are assured of, that if you seek the Lord, you shall certainly find Him; that if you trust in Him, you shall never fail."

Margaret could not answer. She had laid her head upon the bed, with her face turned away from her mother, so as to conceal the tears which she could not restrain. She was resolutely determined not to agitate her mother again by the display of her own grief, and as she felt that she could not command her voice, she remained silent.

Mrs. Cecil readily guessed the truth, and putting her hand fondly upon her head, she said, in a voice full of love and tenderness—

"And we must both remember, my love, that our present bitter sorrow is sent to us by a tender, loving Father, and that His love will provide for us all needful strength and comfort."

"But oh! Mamma," said Margaret in that low, earnest tone, that tells of such deep heart-sorrow, "must it be? Can nothing be done to make you better? Can I do nothing?"

"Nothing to make me better, my love; but you can do, you are doing, much to cheer and comfort my heart in my sickness. My own darling, when I am gone, it will comfort you to remember how helpful you have been to me, and how much your loving services, your dutiful attention to my wishes, have contributed to my peace and happiness."

"Oh, Mamma, they have been my peace and happiness too," sobbed the poor child, unable any longer to preserve her composure.

"I know they have, my own dear loving girl. I know how much pleasure it has given you to deny yourself for my sake, to sacrifice your own inclinations and will to mine. But, dearest Margaret, the performance of your duties will not always be a labour of love. As you go on in life, you may sometimes, perhaps often, be called upon to deny yourself for the sake of those whom you can neither love nor respect, and to sacrifice your inclinations and wishes at the call of mere duty, in cases where affection has no place. And it would be a comfort to me, darling, if you would promise me to strive earnestly, now while you are still young, to acquire the habit of doing *all* things to the Lord, and from a regard to His will; of performing the most trifling every-day duty because He commands it. Will you promise me this, dearest, and promise to ask the Lord to enable you always to make His will the first motive of your every action, and to keep all secondary motives in their right place?"

Margaret had been making a strong effort to overcome her agitation, and she was able to reply in a low firm voice—

"Indeed, dear Mamma, I will try to be, and to do, all you desire."

She had raised her head, and looked round as she spoke, and she was grieved to see how much exhausted her mother seemed to be.

"You have been talking too much, Mamma," she said anxiously, "you must not speak any more. You must lie down, and I will sing a hymn to you, and perhaps you may fall asleep."

Mrs. Cecil was too much fatigued not to feel the wisdom of this advice. Margaret let down the curtains, arranged the pillows, and smoothed the bed-clothes, with all the quietness, gentleness, and skill of an old experienced nurse, and then sat down upon the chair behind the curtain.

"Sing Norah's hymn, my love," said Mrs. Cecil, "and in Norah's way."

And Margaret began in a low, sweet voice that beautiful hymn beginning—

> "There is One above all others,
> O how He loves!"

In the original the next line runs—

> "His is love beyond a brother's;"

but Norah, from whom the children had learned the hymn, had taught them to say, "beyond a mother's." Her reason for the change was this:

This hymn had been a great favourite with an elder sister of hers who had died when Norah was about fourteen. During a lingering illness she used to be constantly repeating it, or singing it to an old air, whose wild sweet melody suited well to the irregular measure of the verse. When her mind began to wander, and her memory had so much failed that she could no longer repeat even a single verse, she often requested those around her to sing it to her, and they used often to hear her murmuring over and over the words—"O how He loves." And even when she became unable to understand or express her own wishes, she still seemed to recognise and enjoy her old favourite when any one repeated it.

A few hours before her death, when Norah and Mrs. Cecil were standing by her bedside, Mrs. Callaghan asked them to sing it. She did so more for her own sake than for her daughter's, for the dying girl seemed at that time to be wholly unconscious. Her breathing was much oppressed, and she was sitting up in bed supported in her mother's arms. Contrary to their expectations, as soon as they began the well-known strain, she opened her eyes and smiled. When they sang the third line, she interrupted them, saying in a clear voice—

"No, no, a mother's, beyond a mother's;" then turning a look full of the tenderest love and gratitude upon her own mother, she repeated slowly, distinctly, and with great emphasis—

"His is love beyond a *mother's*,
O *how* He loves!"

It was the last word she spoke, the last sign of consciousness. She appeared to sleep for an hour or two, and then quietly and gently went to her rest.

Margaret had often heard this scene described, and she perfectly understood that her mother had alluded to it now, in order to remind her of Him whose love is indeed infinitely beyond that of the tenderest mother. Her voice faltered slightly as she sang these words, but the thought strengthened and comforted even while it affected her. She lowered her voice gradually as she went on, so as not to run any risk of awakening her Mamma when she should stop, and pausing at the end of the second verse, she had the satisfaction of finding that her plan had been successful, and that Mrs. Cecil slept.

For more than an hour Margaret remained alone, sometimes reading a few verses in the Bible, sometimes indulging in long fits of quiet crying, but most frequently going again and again over every particular of their conversation, striving to recall her mother's every word, and look, and tone, and forming earnest resolutions to endeavour to fulfil her mother's wishes. She went back too in memory over all she could recollect of her short life; dwelling upon every little incident at all connected with that dear Mamma whom she was so soon to lose, and above all, upon every little instance of that Mamma's love and tenderness to herself.

Mrs. Cecil was by no means a clever or a strong-minded woman, and she had perhaps done less than she might have done in the way of instructing her children. But the beautiful example which her conduct had exhibited of piety, meekness, and gentleness, and patience, exercised a most beneficial influence over the character of her high-spirited, quick-tempered girl, and was by God's blessing the means of effecting a change in that character which perhaps nothing else could have done. Margaret never lost the recollection of this evening, never forgot her promise to her dying mother, the many sweet thoughts of her mother's goodness which passed through her mind as she sat thus alone by her bed-side, nor the fervent prayers which she then offered up that she might be enabled in some degree to follow her example.

It was the last conversation which she ever held with her. Mrs. Cecil had caught cold upon this oppressive day by imprudently sitting by an open window, and the cold was accompanied with fever which rapidly wasted away her little remaining strength. Before another week had passed, she was gone, and her children were motherless.

After her mother's death, poor Margaret had only too many opportunities of exercising that trust in God, that self-denial, that scrupulous regard to duty for its own sake, which Mrs. Cecil had exhorted her to seek after; and that meekness, gentleness, and patience which she had resolved to learn from her dear mother's example.

Never until they lost her, did the children know how much they had been indebted to their mother's tender, watchful care, from how much discomfort, vexation, and real sorrow she had been the means of saving them. There was no one now to interpose between them and their selfish, ill-tempered father; no one to shield them from his fretful, unreasonable exactions, and fault-finding; no one to think of, or provide for, their little wants and comforts. Norah did all she could, did more than perhaps any one but herself could have done, but she could not be always with them, she could not constrain Mr. Cecil to behave kindly towards them, and they had to bear much real hardship during this long severe winter. Theirs had never been a very comfortable home, but now matters were much worse.

A few months before her death, Mrs. Cecil had written to her brother, representing to him the declining state of her health, and the utter destitution to which her children would be reduced upon her death, and entreating him to continue the payment of the annuity at least until they should be old enough to seek their own livelihood.

The answer to this appeal came about a week before her death. It was a very cold letter. Sir Charles began by stating that his sister's letter should not have been opened had he recognised the hand-writing or post-mark, and that henceforth any letter from the same quarter should be destroyed unread. He then proceeded to say, that as Mr. and Mrs. Cecil had not done him the

honour to consult him about their marriage, he did not understand what claim they had to his assistance under the evils which that marriage had brought upon them. In consideration of the affection which his father had entertained for her who had once been his sister, he was willing to continue the annuity for one year after the date of her death, but this was the very last assistance he would ever give the family under any circumstances.

Mrs. Cecil was too weak and ill by the time this letter arrived to be much affected by it, but her husband was terribly disappointed, and with the prospect of utter beggary before him he was at last forced to exert himself. He had wealthy and powerful relations, but they had disowned him before he left England, on account of his reckless, extravagant, and not very honourable conduct. So long as he could live in tolerable comfort upon his wife's income, his pride and anger against his friends had prevented him from making application to them. But now that he was deprived of that means of subsistence, he condescended to write to his uncle, Sir William Cecil, to ask him for assistance.

Sir William was very wealthy, he had no children, he had been Mr. Cecil's guardian, and had at one time shown considerable affection for him, and, therefore, the latter confidently trusted that he would not now refuse to help him when he was reduced to such straits But his hopes were disappointed. Sir William was not a man of very strong or warm feelings. He had been

proud of his young ward's talents, of the honours he had gained at college, and had looked forward to his distinguishing himself in political life; but this only made him the more indignant when his hopes were disappointed, and when his nephew, instead of being an honour, became a disgrace to his family.

Still, had he believed Mr. Ceeil's statement, he probably would so far have overcome his anger as to have given him some assistance. But Mr. Ceeil, to his other accomplishments, had added a great proficiency in the art of lying, and when Sir William read his letter, he merely remarked to his lady—

"That is all lies, we know. He married a lady of fortune, and cannot be in such distress," and so suffered it to remain unanswered.

Even those who most disliked and despised Mr. Ceeil might have pitied him now. From his declining state of health, he was really almost incapacitated from seeking any employment by which to support himself and his children, and his whole means of subsistence for the rest of his life was reduced to a sum which he had, until now, thought a very scanty allowance for one year alone. His only resource was to endeavour by the most rigid economy to make the sum last as long as possible.

And as might have been expected from his character, all the discomfort of that economy was made to press most heavily upon his children and servants. While his own comforts and luxuries were little if at all diminished, he seemed to grudge every farthing which

was expended even upon the necessaries of life for them. While he persisted in having even expensive dainties sent up to his own table, the coarsest kind of food, and that in very scanty measure, was considered good enough for them. While he took care to keep up good fires in his own rooms, to have plenty of light through the long winter evenings for his own occupations, he grudged every morsel of wood that was used elsewhere, and declared that if the servants did not choose to do their work in the day-time, they must learn to do it in the dark.

The poor children had naturally to bear their full share of all the hardships occasioned by this desire to save, which had taken possession of Mr. Cecil's mind, but they were also made to suffer from the discomforts of the servants. Hitherto the latter had feared their master almost as much as they disliked him, and had felt too much in awe of him to venture to disobey or neglect his commands. But now this awe gave place to a natural indignation at the treatment which they experienced at his hands. They became careless in the performance of their duties, reckless as to whether he were pleased or not, and saucy under his reproaches. And whilst his natural ill-humour and peevishness was increased by every instance of neglect and carelessness, he was forced to be more cautious about expressing it to the offenders themselves, lest they might rebel altogether, or leave his service, and, therefore a larger proportion of it fell upon the children; upon poor Mar-

garet at least, for he really had a kind of fondness for his son, a kind of pride in him.

Arthur was a very handsome boy. He had beautiful, delicate features, and his whole figure and deportment had that peculiar air of elegance and refinement, which it is so difficult to describe, so easy to see and feel. He had, too, a very uncommon genius for the same kind of studies in which his father had distinguished himself. It was an amusement to Mr. Cecil to give him instruction in these studies, while the boy's proficiency recalled pleasant images of the praise and admiration which his own had once excited.

On all these accounts, Arthur was a favourite, a kind of pet or plaything, and Mr. Cecil very seldom ever exercised his tyranny or ill-humour upon him, but reserved it all for Margaret, whom he had never looked upon in any other light than as an additional expense, another drain upon their small income. He found fault with everything she did, made her constantly give up her rights to Arthur, exacted from her every kind of unreasonable service, and taunted her with her want of grace and elegance, telling her she was far more like a peasant's than a gentleman's child. Had Margaret possessed less spirit and natural cheerfulness, she could not have borne all this without becoming desponding and fretful; had she possessed less generosity and warmth of heart, she might have learned to dislike that brother towards whom such undue partiality was shown; and had she not been taught the duty of

self-denial and self-government, she never could have borne with patience all that she was called upon to bear. As it was, poor girl, she really did her duty nobly. She really strove nobly to keep her promise to her dying mother.

When she had rendered a prompt obedience to all her father's commands, however unreasonable, when she had borne with meekness all his reproofs, however unjust, when she had performed every service which he required from her, it might have been thought that she had fully done her duty, and that it was both natural and allowable for her to keep as much out of his presence as she could. But Margaret did not think so. She never forgot her mother's words—"Duty may require you to be kind, attentive, and helpful towards those whom you cannot love;" and she told herself that if duty could ever require her to be so to any one, it must be towards her own father; that if it was right for her to watch with anxious care over her mother's comfort, it must be right to watch over her father's too. And, indeed, she felt that she was necessary to him; although he said that she was clumsy and awkward, and never arranged his pillows comfortably, yet if she did not do it, no one else would. Although he always asserted that she never brought him the footstool he liked best, yet if she had not brought him one, he must have got it for himself. And however he might grumble about her heavy foot, and noisy way of opening the door, yet if she did not answer his bell, he must have

had the trouble of ringing two or three times before the saucy Michael would go near him.

Nor did Margaret find it so very difficult to discharge her duties even in these circumstances. The feeling that she was doing what was right, that she was obeying God's commands, and that God would certainly give her all the strength of will and of forbearance, all the wisdom and the skill which she required, was a constant and sure consolation. Then Norah's careful instructions had been the means of giving her the habit of feeling that she *must* do what she *ought* to do, and that habit is of wonderful efficacy in enabling us to perform difficult tasks with cheerfulness as well as steadiness. Norah had also taught her to this end never to indulge in grumbling about them, or in useless meditations over their hardship, but always to seek to place them in their pleasantest light, to make them look as easy as possible. And above all, Norah had taught her to realize the constant presence and sympathy of her blessed Saviour, to believe and feel that He saw her every little grievance, that He felt for her, and was able and anxious to help her in every little trouble.

Margaret was too young at the time to know how useful, nay how necessary, all this discipline was to her, but in after-life she often blessed her heavenly Father for these trials of childhood, often acknowledged that she could not have spared one of them. And even at the time, she had some reward in the approbation of

her own conscience, in the warm admiration and affection of her dear Arthur, and in the judicious praise and sympathy of Norah. Her father, too, was sometimes touched and softened by her behaviour, and towards the close of his life, even began to testify some affection for her, some desire for her presence.

That close of life was not far distant. His anxiety and care to save were useless to himself at least. The year's income allowed him was not required to last much longer than it had always done. He died little more than a year after his wife.

His was a desolate, melancholy death-bed. He had lived for no one, he had loved or cared for no one but himself, and now when he came to die, there was not a single creature to be interested in him, to mourn for him, except his poor children, and Norah for their sakes.

Jeannette and Michael, the two servants, were by no means deficient in good nature and kindness of heart. They did feel some degree of compassion for that once proud master, now that he was stretched helpless and suffering upon a bed of sickness. But it was not strong enough to induce them to make any great sacrifice for one who had never treated them kindly, nay, even justly. When he first became alarmingly ill, they sat up with him alternately upon those nights when Norah could not take that office upon herself, as she generally did. But they soon wearied of this service. They persuaded themselves, and each other, that it really was not to be expected that they should

give up their natural and hard-won rest for one who had never shown the least kindness to them, or the least desire for their comfort. They were willing, they said, to rise through the night and answer his bell if he rang for help, but they saw no use in sitting up and keeping awake a whole night, when really there might be nothing wanted. And so he was left alone through the long dreary hours of the night, and that when he really was often too weak and ill to leave his bed, or to make any effort to summon assistance, however much he might require it.

As he became worse, poor Margaret could not bear the thought of his being left in this way;—she felt oppressed at the idea of the grief which she supposed it must occasion to her dear Mamma, even in heaven, to see her poor husband thus deserted; and she often stole from her room in the middle of the night, to go and sit by his bed-side.

Norah did not become aware of this state of matters till the day on which he died. Margaret kept her part a profound secret from every one, lest she should be forbidden to repeat it, and the servants concealed theirs from a desire to avoid the reproaches which Norah's disinterested, generous, self-sacrificing character, so well entitled her to make to them. She was very much grieved when she heard it. But it was useless to remonstrate then, as it was evident that one, or at most two nights' attendance was all that he would require, and these she determined to give herself.

She did not go home till late in the afternoon of that day, and she promised Margaret to return as soon as she had seen her boy and her husband comfortably settled for the night. It was a wild stormy night in February—there had been constant showers of snow, rain, and sleet, through the day, and the wind had risen to a tempest as night came on. Philippe had been absent all day. He had gone on business to a town many miles off, and did not return till quite late at night, bringing home fearful accounts of the state of the roads, and of the damage done by the furious wind. He was most unwilling that Norah should go out on such a night, all the more unwilling that she should do so in the service of such a man as Mr. Cecil. But Norah would not take a refusal.

She had promised their dying mother, she said, that she would be a mother to her children, and what mother would mind braving wind and rain in order to give her dear ones the comfort of her presence at such a time of sorrow.

Philippe reluctantly consented, and Norah with some difficulty made her way to the chateau. She found both the servants sitting over the kitchen fire. They were afraid, they said, to remain in Mr. Cecil's room. The wind was howling so furiously along the long deserted galleries, and making such strange, unearthly noises in the old chimney, that they really could not stand it. And then the poor gentleman was past wanting anything. He was quite unconscious. It was

quite the same to him whether they were by his bed-side, or down here in the kitchen.

"And the same to that poor girl, too, I suppose?" asked Norah indignantly. "Are you a woman, Jeannette, and had you the heart to leave such a child alone with her helpless, dying father?"

"I advised her to go to bed. I told her there was no use in staying," stammered Jeannette, a good deal ashamed of her cowardice and want of consideration.

Norah left the kitchen, and proceeded up stairs without making any reply. She was habitually anxious to judge charitably of every one, and she felt that her warm feelings of compassion for her child, as she called Margaret, made her perhaps unwilling to excuse Jeannette.

The wind was indeed howling drearily through that large, empty, half-ruined house, shattering the already broken casements, and causing the old crazy doors to swing backwards and forwards with a wild unpleasant noise, or to close with a sudden and startling slam.

Norah entered the room as quietly and noiselessly as she could. The fire burned dimly on the hearth. The single candle upon the table had long been left unsnuffed. Flickering, from the wind which was freely admitted through the ill-fitting casement, it cast a feeble and uncertain light around the room. But one glance was sufficient to tell Norah that all was over, that Mr. Cecil was dead. And there was poor Margaret, sitting by his bed-side fast asleep. Completely worn

out by one or two nights' watching, with all her anxiety for her father, she had been unable to keep awake. Her head had fallen forwards upon the large book which she had been reading, and she was sleeping as soundly and peacefully as if she had been in her bed.

The tears filled Norah's eyes as she looked at the poor child sleeping thus sweetly and unconsciously by her father's corpse; and she endeavoured to raise her in her arms without awakening her, in order to carry her to her own room.

Margaret only partially awoke. She half opened her eyes, then muttering drowsily, "Mamma, my own dear Mamma," she let her head fall upon Norah's shoulder, and was again fast asleep. Norah's tears fell fast as she clasped her still closer to her heart.

"My child, my poor Margaret, I will indeed, with God's help, be a mother to you," she murmured as she carried her tenderly along the passage, and laid her, all dressed as she was, in her bed.

And she kept her promise most nobly; but I must leave that subject to another chapter.

CHAPTER III.

"I CAN, BECAUSE I OUGHT."

"And so he is gone, poor man!" was Philippe's remark next morning when he heard from Norah of Mr. Cecil's death. "Well, it is not right to speak ill of the dead, but surely if ever there was a man whose life was of no value to a single human being, he was such a man. I never could help thinking how much happier and better his poor wife and children would be without him."

"His children feel his death very much," replied Norah, "more than I almost expected—at least as far as regards Margaret; for you know, poor child, she never received even common kindness from him. She cried most bitterly when I told her, refusing to be comforted, and always repeating, 'Oh, Papa, Papa! Mamma gone, and now Papa gone too. Oh, Norah, it is very sore; oh, Norah, my heart is *so* sore!'"

"Poor child! She has such a generous little heart; she will have quite forgotten all his harshness."

"Yes, quite. She only speaks of the great kindness, as she calls it, which he has shown towards her of

late. 'He liked so much to have me with him, Norah, and thought that I did things better than I used to do, and now he is gone, and now I can never do anything for him again.' She sobbed so bitterly as she told me, that the last words he ever spoke distinctly were to her, when she was arranging his pillows, two or three days ago, when he said, 'Thank you, dear, that is nice.' She thinks as much of that simple, 'thank you, dear,' as another child might do of a hundred 'loves' and 'darlings.' But, Philippe, we must not waste time in talking: we have so much to settle about. We must see about the funeral, and what money he has left to pay for it, and to pay the servants' wages, and his debts."

"Debts!" exclaimed Philippe in a surprised tone; "I did not know that he had any. In a poor place like this, one would have thought he could not get into debt. One would have thought that the people must know him too well."

"True; but then you see they were so afraid of him. They did not like to refuse him anything that he asked, or to press for payment after he had got it. It is not much that he owes. Only a small sum here, and another there. He has never paid farmer Michael for the cow which he bought last summer, nor the miller for the last supply of flour, and so on. But if the debts are small, so is the sum out of which they must be paid."

"Well, well!" said Philippe in his own cheerful

hearty manner. "It can't be helped. We must do the best we can for everybody. It is odd enough, that we should be obliged to take the sole charge of all these matters, and I don't quite like it. But there is no one else. And after all, these poor children must henceforward be to us as our own. Our home their home, our life their life, and their interests ours. So that we ought not to feel any difficulty in managing their concerns for them."

"Bless you, Philippe, for saying so," said Norah gratefully. "I knew you would—and I thank God that He has given my own dear husband such a heart, as makes it impossible for him to feel or act otherwise."

"Nay, nay, Norah. No man could have the heart to leave these poor children to shift for themselves, even if he had no liking for them, as I really have. And by the good hand of God upon us, we have plenty for them, and for our own boy too. They shall never want so long as I can help it, and we must teach them to work for their bread, as if they were really our own children. Both they and we must learn to forget that they were ever anything but the children of Philippe, the plain French peasant. They have nothing but a life of honest hard labour to look forward to, and we must teach them to look forward to nothing else."

Norah's plan for the children of her adoption was not quite the same as Philippe's. But she knew that he might not perhaps quite approve of hers. They had

much business to attend to immediately, and she deferred the proposal of it to a more fitting time. Philippe went off to their good friend the pastor to ask his advice and assistance in the settlement of Mr. Cecil's affairs. And Norah had plenty of occupation in arranging for the accommodation of Margaret and Arthur, whom she wished to bring home to her cottage that night.

Pierre's little bed-closet off the kitchen was given up to Margaret, and by the exercise of a little ingenuity, and with the help of a few articles of furniture from the chateau, Norah converted the empty loft up stairs into a very comfortable apartment for the two boys.

The Cecils had never been accustomed to luxuries. They were quite contented with their accommodations at the cottage, and, indeed, in many respects, they were far more comfortable than they had been since their mother's death.

As Norah had expected, the necessary expenses of Mr. Cecil's funeral, and the payment of his debts, more than consumed the small sum of money which remained in his possession at the time of his death; and they were obliged to dispose of almost all his books, and other effects, in order to clear everything. It was difficult to find purchasers for these in such a retired corner, but with their kind friend the pastor's assistance, everything was at last sold, and every one received their due. And now Norah had time to think of her plans, and seek to gain Philippe's consent to them.

It was the evening after the final arrangement had been completed. The children had gone to bed, and as Norah and her husband sat alone together beside the kitchen fire, Philippe expressed his satisfaction that now that business was over, they could settle quietly down into their usual way of life.

"Not just yet, dear Philippe. I want you to let me take a long journey before we settle down."

"A long journey, Norah! Where do you want to go?" and Philippe stared at her with a look of bewilderment, which made Norah laugh, anxious and earnest as she was about her projects.

"You must listen to me patiently, Philippe," she said; "I know you can't like my plan at first, but indeed I have good reasons for it. So you will hear me patiently. Won't you?"

"But, Norah, where do you want to go? Or what do you want to do?"

"Well, Philippe, I want to go to Paris. Monsieur Duverger tells me that he saw Sir Charles O'Brien's name among the arrivals in Paris lately; and I want to try to see him, and to persuade him to do something for his only sister's children."

"But, Norah," remonstrated Philippe, "he has said that he will do nothing for them; he has said that he will never give them a farthing."

"I know that he has, and that it would be useless to write. But if I saw him, he might find it more difficult to refuse me all aid. And I might perhaps get at some

who have influence over him, and I might be able to interest them in the cause of the poor orphans. At any rate, dear Philippe, it is worth trying."

"I don't see that," replied Philippe with some warmth. "The children are well enough here with us. They are as well off as our own boy. I don't see that they want more."

"But we cannot live always, dear Philippe," said Norah gently, though pleadingly; "and then"—

"And then. Well, they must work for themselves as our own boy must do. Why, Norah, you have none of these anxieties for him."

"He is in the Lord's hands, dear Philippe. We do all we can for him while we are spared, and when the Lord is pleased to take us away, I hope He will enable us to trust to Him to care for our boy."

"Well, and we must trust to Him to care for these children too."

"Yes," said Norah emphatically, "*after* we have done all we can for them, but not before."

Philippe moved restlessly on his chair. He could not bear the idea of his wife undertaking such a long and fatiguing journey.

"All we can, Norah," he repeated with more impatience than was at all usual to him. "Well, and are we not doing all we can when we are making them equal sharers with our boy in all we have?"

"Not if I refuse to take this journey which I *can* take, and which may, with God's blessing, be the

means of rendering those poor orphans in some measure independent."

Philippe rose and began walking hastily up and down the room.

"Independent, Norah," he again repeated impatiently, "I don't understand you to-night. The best independence a man can have is that which he works out for himself, and the greatest kindness you can show these children, will be to teach them to depend upon nobody but their God and themselves, to look to nothing but their own exertions as the means of prosperity in the world."

"I hope that in any case I should be desirous to teach them that," replied Norah. "Whether I succeed or fail, I should be equally anxious to give them the habit of helping themselves, of never asking any one to do that for them which they can do for themselves, however hard the doing of it may be. And whether I succeed or fail, I trust that I should be equally willing to leave them cheerfully in the hands of their heavenly Father, equally confident that He will provide for them. But then, dear Philippe, as I said before, I cannot feel that trust and confidence if I have neglected any means which God has given me for providing for their future support and comfort. God does not bless the man who does not labour when He calls him to labour. We cannot expect Him to do that for us which we have refused to do for ourselves when He pointed it out to us."

Philippe was silent for some minutes. He was a

good deal impressed by Norah's quiet earnestness of manner. Norah, with all her deep true love of her husband, all her respect and admiration of his character, was quite unconscious in how far she was the director in the affairs of the little household, how much Philippe's judgments and opinions were guided by hers. It seemed to her perfectly natural that Philippe should tell her all his plans or difficulties, quite as natural that she should frankly and freely express her opinion upon them. And when she was pleased at the perfect agreement which there was always between their decisions, she had not the least suspicion that this often resulted from the habit which Philippe had acquired of trusting implicitly to her judgment, and of allowing himself to be entirely guided by it.

Not that Philippe was at all deficient in sense or judgment himself; but he was not so quick as Norah, and it saved him trouble to allow her to devise and point out the means to be pursued in any case, and to take upon himself the easier task of judging and approving of what she said. This habit of his came to Norah's assistance now. After pacing thoughtfully and silently up and down the room for some minutes, he resumed his seat by the fireside, and said in a yielding tone—

"But, Norah, how can you go at this season? And you will need money for such a long journey"

"Not much, dear Philippe," was Norah's cheerful answer, "and what I do need I have got. I have been thinking for a long time that I might be called to do

this, and I have kept it steadily before my mind, and have for many months past contrived to do a little extra work every day in order to provide the means for it. So that at last I have got quite a store of pretty things laid up, of worked collars and cuffs, and those fine knitted aprons and shawls which the good old Margot taught me to make, and for which Madame Duverger gets such high prices when she sells them for me. Some of these things she has got orders for, and she has paid me for them, so that I have plenty of money to take me to Paris, and the other things she says I can easily sell there, and get money for my journey home."

"But are you sure, Norah, that you have enough?" asked Philippe anxiously, his mind full of vague ideas of her means failing when she was far away from his assistance. "It must take a deal of money to go to Paris."

"Yes, if I meant to travel as a lady," laughed Norah, "but not as I mean to go. I shall not go to the great expensive inns, but seek my nights' lodgings as often as I can at the house of simple peasants like ourselves, who will be willing to give me a share of their own simple fare for such a sum as I can afford to pay. Your countrymen have kind hearts, Philippe. There are many who will be glad to help me when I tell of the poor helpless orphans for whose sakes I travel. Then I have been carefully studying the map, and a very useful guide-book which Monsieur Duverger lent me, and I know the best road to take; the road in which

I shall be most likely to meet with boats going up the larger rivers, with market-waggons, and such cheap conveyances, and when these fail I can walk."

"Walk to Paris, Norah! Nonsense," said Philippe impatiently.

"No, not to Paris, only part of the way. But don't be afraid, Philippe; I love my dear big husband, and my dear little boy, far too well to run any needless risk of doing myself harm by over fatigue. If you will only consent to my going, I will promise you to take as much care of myself as you could."

"Oh, as to consent, I suppose I must give it," said Philippe with a dubious half smile. "But I wish you were safe back again. And if you fail after all, Norah?"

"I shall be sorry for the failure, but not at all for having made the exertion. I go because I think I ought to go; because I think that the promise which I made to be a mother to these children, calls upon me to go, and my success or failure cannot make it either more or less my duty. All that I have to care for now is your comfort while I am away."

In a few days the active Norah had made all her arrangements, and was ready to start upon her long and toilsome journey. The Cecils' old servant, Jeannette, undertook to come every morning to the cottage to perform all the necessary household duties during her absence.

Jeannette had felt both sorry and ashamed of her negligence towards Mr. Cecil upon his death-bed, and

was glad to render this little service as some amends. And Margot, a very kind old woman, who lived close beside them, promised Norah to look after Jeannette, and see that she did her duty properly, and that the little family were comfortable.

And so she set out with a cheerful heart and a steady resolution not to be turned aside by any difficulty or labour. And well was it for her that she had such a resolution, for in truth her difficulties and labours were neither few nor small. Many and many a mile had she to walk through cold and wet, through frost and snow and rain. And often when she came at night wearied and cold to her journey's end, she found no hospitable roof to shelter her, but was forced to content herself with a bed of straw in a barn or out-house, or with such accommodation as she could get in a dirty inn of the lowest order.

But her heart never failed her. She was not one to be easily discouraged. Steadily and cheerfully she went on her way, keeping constantly before her mind the great object she had in view; the firm conviction that she was doing her duty, and the quiet confidence that she should find God's blessing going with her. "I can, because I ought," had been a favourite maxim of her mother's. Norah had learned when a child to apply it to her childish difficulties, and now that she was a woman, it strengthened her to face difficulties which most women would have shrunk from in dismay.

But although her undertaking proved by no means an

easy one, yet she met with many encouragements on her way. She found her confidence in the kindliness of the peasantry fully justified, and received much assistance and sympathy. The simple manner in which she told her little story, her total unconsciousness of any merit attaching to her generous exertions, often won for her a warmer interest than even the story itself. Most of her auditors were Roman Catholics, and a slight feeling of disapprobation at the mother's desertion of the true religion, a slight feeling of sympathy in her brother's resentment at that desertion, interfered to check their full compassion for the orphans, but had no influence upon the warm admiration which was aroused by Norah's devoted affection for her foster-sister, leading her to continue her loving services to her children, and to undertake for their sakes such a journey, at such a season, with such slender hopes of success.

Many a mother refused to take payment for her night's lodging and food from one who was so nobly fulfilling a mother's part for those who had no mother of their own. And many pressed her with real earnestness to come to them again on her way home, that they might hear how she had prospered in her mission, and might again have the pleasure of helping her.

One family from whom she had received even more kindness than usual, had a sister and brother-in-law settled in Paris. They gave her their address, and a letter warmly recommending her to them. This proved

a great advantage to her. She found both husband and wife to be exactly the kind of people most able and willing to assist her. They were shrewd and intelligent, and at the same time simple, kind, warm-hearted, and hospitable. To have so lately seen and conversed with the dear ones in their old home, would have been quite sufficient to insure her a cordial welcome. But when to this was added the interest excited by her personal history and character, and the circumstance of her being a friendless stranger in that large town, there seemed no limits to their kindness and desire to serve her. Protestant like herself, those circumstances in her story which had lessened the interest of some of her auditors only increased theirs. They insisted that she should remain with them during her whole stay in Paris, and entered with their whole hearts upon the business of finding out Sir Charles O'Brien.

As the husband from the nature of his occupation, a water-carrier, had friends in all parts of the town, this task was soon accomplished. Before Norah had been many hours in his house, he had obtained for her all the necessary information. Sir Charles had not come to Paris for a short visit as Norah had supposed. He had taken a large furnished house for two years, and had brought over all his family and servants. The porter, the only Frenchman belonging to the establishment, was a friend of the water-carrier, and was ready for his sake to admit Norah into the house.

On the following day, accordingly, her kind host escorted her to the place, introduced her to his friend, and there left her. And there all her good fortune seemed to have left her too. Sir Charles was too despotic a master, his servants were too well tutored, to venture to usher a stranger into his presence without his permission; or even to carry any request for an interview from one who refused to declare her business. They were all English, not Irish as Norah had hoped; there was no common tie or interest between her and them, and they were determined not to risk their master's displeasure for the sake of a mere stranger.

But Norah was determined too, determined to succeed. By quietly refusing to take any denial, by her constant, persevering entreaties, she at last prevailed upon one of the footmen to carry up a message, begging for a few minutes' conversation with Sir Charles upon a subject in which he was himself much concerned.

It was in vain. The young man returned immediately with the answer, that she might tell her business to the butler, and he would communicate it to Sir Charles, but he would positively not see her. And Norah saw herself most reluctantly forced to leave the house without having gained her object.

She was grieved and mortified, but not disheartened. She had never expected to gain access to Sir Charles without considerable difficulty, and although one plan had failed, she could try some other. If Sir Charles would not grant her an audience willingly, she must

force him to give her one against his will. If she could not see him in his own house, she must contrive to meet him in the streets. And, accordingly, she kept for many days close and constant watch upon the door of the house, so that no one could pass out or in without her being aware of it. She might have been seen pacing quietly and patiently up and down for hours at a time, heedless of fatigue, or the inclemency of the weather, and only taking a few short intervals of rest in a shop opposite, whose proprietor was a friend of the water-carrier, and from whose window she could continue her observations.

But many days were spent in this manner without any result. Sir Charles was either quite confined to the house, or only went out after Norah had gone home at night. Her patience was beginning to fail, not on her own account, but for the sake of those she had left at home, and of whose comfort she could not feel very confident, left as they were to the care of the heedless Jeannette.

She had almost resolved to abandon this plan, and to try the effect of a letter, when her hopes were revived one afternoon, by seeing Sir Charles' horse brought round to the door. Here was the long wished-for opportunity at last. Norah took her stand quietly in front of the door. A servant came out, and her hopes were confirmed by hearing the groom ask if Sir Charles was ready. The servant looked keenly at Norah. He was one of those she had seen in her unsuccessful

visit. He evidently recognised her, and she feared might warn his master of her presence. But her fears were vain. Sir Charles was not at all beloved by his servants. They felt too little interest in him, to take the trouble of giving him unasked information about any matter, however deeply his comfort or welfare might be involved in it. The servant had recognised her, and had correctly guessed her purpose, but it was no business of his, he thought. If she chose to tease his master by her importunities, she might do so, he had no concern in it.

And now a gentleman's step was heard in the hall, and then Norah recognised Sir Charles' voice giving some directions. Her heart beat quickly, and she offered up a silent prayer for courage and wisdom. Sir Charles came out. Norah placed herself before him, and in a respectful, but earnest tone, begged him to listen to her for a moment upon a business of great importance.

"Your name, woman?" he asked sternly, fixing a scrutinizing glance upon her face.

Alas, poor Norah! For once your self-possession and presence of mind deserted you. Why speak in English to allow your Irish accent to betray you? Why answer Norah, instead of Madame Chantal, to confirm Sir Charles' half-awakened suspicions?

"Stand out of my way. I know who you are, and from whom you come," was his only answer, as he strode haughtily past her, and mounted his horse.

Norah followed, and would have put her hand upon the bridle to detain him, but the groom held her gently back. Sir Charles rode away without another look or word.

"It is of no use trying to move master, my good woman," said the groom good-naturedly. "If you want to beg anything from him, speak to Father Urban. He will listen to you, and he is the only person who can do anything with master," and so saying he mounted and followed Sir Charles.

Norah was for a moment completely cast down by this disappointment, but for a moment only. Before she had arrived at the house of her friends, she had already formed a new plan of operations, and had already regained her usual patient, hopeful, steadfast spirit, and her quiet confidence in her God's presence and blessing.

Her new scheme had been first suggested to her by the last words of the friendly groom. During her long watch before Sir Charles' door, she had often observed a gentleman who was constantly passing out and in, and who appeared to be an inmate of the household. He wore the dress of an ecclesiastic, and Norah had little difficulty in deciding that he must be the Father Urban to whom the groom had advised her to apply.

It did seem rather a forlorn hope, that of inducing a Roman Catholic priest to use his interest on behalf of a heretic, or to interfere to ward off from her children, what he might think the righteous consequence of their mother's desertion of the true religion. But Norah

resolved to make the attempt, and she did not altogether despair of a favourable result. She was a keen physiognomist, and she believed she could read in the countenance of Father Urban, such clear indications of a benevolent heart, as promised fair to obtain for her at least a patient hearing.

She did not communicate her plan to her friends the water-carrier and his wife. One of their favourite topics of conversation was the intolerance and bigotry of the Roman Catholic priesthood. They had witnessed many instances of most unjust persecution. Norah knew what a bad opinion they had of the whole body, and that they could entertain no hope of her obtaining any kindness or even justice from any member of it. She did not wish to have her hands weakened by their desponding prognostications, and therefore merely told them that she had a new plan which she should fully explain to them the following evening.

Early the next morning, after a fervent prayer to God for His help for success if that were agreeable to His will, and for calm submission to that will whatever it might be, Norah set out on her new undertaking. The state of her feelings could not be better described than in the words of the Scripture—"In quietness and confidence" was "her strength."

"It may not please the Lord to give me success," was her thought as she took her way through the well-known streets; "but I know, and am sure, that He will give me strength to do my duty now, and to

acquiesce in His will whatever be the result." And so in quietness and confidence she resumed her patient watch.

She had not taken many turns up and down the street before she saw the object of her search coming towards the house. He had been out thus early upon some errand of kindness, and to judge from his expression of calm happiness, his errand had been successful. Norah augured well from this little circumstance. The empty state of the street also—there being no passengers but themselves—was very favourable to her wishes. She approached him, and made her request for a few moments' audience.

Father Urban answered with a kind gentle courtesy most encouraging to her, and she told her little story without fear or hesitation, with a simple earnest eloquence, which powerfully enlisted the feelings of her auditor in her behalf. He listened with much attention, considered for a few minutes after she had concluded, and then said that he believed he might be able to advance her wishes, but that he should give her a final answer on the morrow.

Norah could do nothing more than thank him for his kindness, and go home to wait as patiently as she could for the promised communication.

She could not have waited so quietly and hopefully as she did, had she known the nature of Father Urban's request to Sir Charles, or the danger to which she had unconsciously exposed her young charge.

The priest urged Sir Charles most earnestly to claim the guardianship of the orphans, to assert his right as their nearest relation to the entire control of them and of their affairs, and to bring them home to his own house where they could be properly educated in the Roman Catholic religion.

But upon this point Sir Charles was firm. He had openly declared his determination to have nothing to do with his rebellious sister or her children, and his pride in his own firmness of purpose forbade him to allow any one to say that he, Sir Charles O'Brien, could change his mind on any point. He positively refused to countenance them openly, and only consented to allow a small yearly sum to Norah Chantal for their maintenance upon condition that she should promise never to trouble him again, never to bring them in contact with himself.

Father Urban felt ashamed to tell Norah how little success he had had, and how small was the sum which Sir Charles had consented to pay. But Norah was quite contented, she had no anxiety about their comfortable maintenance during her own and Philippe's life. Nay, much as she loved Margaret, she felt comparatively little anxiety as regarded her, even in the event of herself and her husband being early taken from them. Margaret would make friends wherever she went. Margaret had strength of character to enable her to help herself, and to be contented however she might be situated.

Her great anxiety was for Arthur, the clever, talented, but weak and sensitive Arthur. She felt convinced that he never could support himself by the labour of his hands, never could fight his own way through the world. And her main object in undertaking her journey had been to obtain the means of educating him, of placing him in circumstances to use the talents which God had given him for his own benefit, and for the good of others.

And small as was Sir Charles' allowance, she believed that they might contrive to make it sufficient for that purpose. She knew her husband's opinions and feelings well enough to be assured that he would agree with her in this matter, and would cheerfully consent to the plans which she had already laid.

For a few years the whole sum must be suffered to accumulate, with such additions as she and Margaret could make by their needle-work. Arthur in the meantime must go on studying as well as he could by himself till they had got enough of money to send him to college.

Through the kindness of her new friends in Paris, the small sum which she had appropriated to her maintenance while detained there, was almost untouched, and with this she procured a plentiful supply of books for his use. With the hope of being able to save a little money, she had before leaving home obtained from Monsieur Duverger a list of those which would be most useful, and she rejoiced greatly to find that she was able to procure almost every one which he had named.

And now she had parted from her kind friends with feelings of warm affection and esteem upon both sides, and many mutual wishes that they may some time or other meet again. And she has again entered upon her toilsome journey. She has again to walk many a weary mile in all kinds of weather, but she now feels the hardship less than ever, for every mile brings her nearer her dear home.

But you may perhaps wish to know how matters were going on at the cottage during Norah's absence. At first everything went on most prosperously. Everybody was as comfortable as Norah herself could have wished. Old Margot kept her promise most faithfully. She could not do the work herself, but she was always going out and in, watching over Jeannette, reminding her of the little duties she was so apt to forget, and encouraging her by kind pleasant words to perform all her tasks faithfully. And for the first week or two Jeannette did remarkably well. Proud of Norah's confidence in her, anxious to prove that it was not misplaced, she spared no exertions to do all her work in the most perfect way. Norah herself could not have had Philippe's breakfast ready more exactly at the proper time. Norah could not have been more regular in feeding the fowls and milking the cow, or more scrupulous about the perfect cleanliness of her milk-dishes and her churn. Norah could not have kept the floor of her little kitchen more perfectly free from speck or stain, could not have rubbed up the tables

and chairs more diligently, dusted every corner of the shelves more faithfully, or made the pewter dishes and spoons more dazzlingly bright.

But all this only lasted for a week or two. At the end of that time Margot had a severe attack of rheumatism, was confined to bed, and could no longer exercise her watchful superintendence over Philippe's comfort. And about the same time Jeannette began to weary of her self-imposed task.

She became less anxious about wakening in time in the morning, and about being regular in all her operations. Often when Philippe came in expecting his breakfast to be ready, he found that the fire was not lighted, the kettle was not filled, nor even the first preparations begun. And often when he came home at night, the melancholy lowing of the cow told him that her food had been forgotten, or that the milking hour was long past. Jeannette began to think too that all this extra cleanliness was very superfluous. In no other house in the valley was there such a constant sweeping, and dusting, and rubbing, and scouring. She did not see why Philippe should be more particular than his neighbours. People might be comfortable enough, she thought, though their floor was not swept, or their fire-place cleaned out every day. And so she gradually relaxed her labours. The grate was left full of ashes, the floor became so covered with mud and dirt and crumbs, that the original colour of the flag-stones could not be seen; the window was darkened with dust and

cobwebs, and it became a somewhat unpleasant task to remove any article from the shelves, owing to the accumulation of dust which was apt to fly up and choke or blind the unwary person who ventured to disturb it.

All this Philippe could have borne without much discomfort in his bachelor days, before his Norah had taught him what cleanliness and comfort meant. But now he certainly did dislike it very much. He did not grumble. It was not in his nature to do so, but he looked and felt desolate and melancholy. He often sighed as he looked round the cheerless room, and wished that his active, tidy wife were once more back.

Margaret's keen eyes soon perceived how much he felt the discomfort of their way of life, and she was most anxious to remedy it.

"I am so vexed about Father Philippe," she said to the two boys one evening as they sat round the fire waiting for him to come home. "He seems so uncomfortable, and seems to dislike so much Jeannette's way of doing things."

"Dislike it! I should think so," was Pierre's impetuous answer. "Why, Margaret, nothing is right or comfortable about us. Look at all these crumbs upon the floor. They have been lying there for more than a week."

"And the book-shelves," added Arthur pathetically, "so covered with dust and so untidy. All the books

tumbling about, and dirty pieces of paper, broken cups and saucers stuffed in among them."

"And one might get a good writing lesson on the tables and chairs," said Margaret, glancing round.

"And the milk so full of hairs," sighed Arthur.

"And the dishes so dirty. Why, Margaret, the plate I had at breakfast this morning had all the grease and gravy of yesterday's dinner. Bah! it is abominable. I wish my mother were back." And the little Pierre gave the true French grimace and shrug of the shoulders.

"Our wishes cannot bring our mother back," said Margaret gravely; "but I think we might do something to make ourselves and our father more comfortable."

Arthur opened his large eyes wide, as he repeated the monosyllable "We!"

"I mean," said Margaret, "that I think *I* can make matters better."

"Why, Margaret, what can you do?" asked Pierre.

"I don't see why I might not take Jeannette's place and do all the work myself, since she does it so ill."

Pierre laughed a contemptuous, irritating laugh. He was more than a year younger than Margaret, but he considered himself much more knowing and experienced about all matters relating to the domestic economy of the cottage.

"And how could *you* do better, Margaret? you don't know about anything."

Margaret had made her proposal in a somewhat

bashful, hesitating manner, as if she feared it might be thought presumptuous. But Pierre's expression of contempt, which she felt was undeserved, restored her at once to self-confidence, and she answered firmly and decidedly—

"I could at least take pains, Pierre, which Jeannette does not."

"Oh, taking pains is all very well, but it is not everything. One must know how to set about things. You don't know how to light a fire, Margaret."

"Yes, I do," she answered eagerly; "it was I who lit it yesterday morning, and made the breakfast ready too. Jeannette did not come at all till nearly dinner-time."

"Or how to sweep a floor," persisted Pierre, not heeding her assertion of competency. "You don't know even how to hold the broom, you would hold it as you do your rake."

"And if I did, what then?" she asked gravely. "If I found that was not the right way I could try another, and another, and *every* way till I found the right one. I don't say I could do all the cleaning as handily or as quickly as our mother, or perhaps do it in the way that other people do; but I could surely go on working and working until I had, in some fashion or other, removed all the dirt. And if I took care not to leave a single speck or stain, the room must surely be clean, however awkwardly I may have held my brush or duster. I may not be able to make the dishes as pretty and bright

as our mother does, but I can at least wash and rub, and rub and wash, until they are quite clean."

"Well," said Pierre a little patronizingly, "I dare say it might do after all. I am sure I will help you as much as I can; but, Margaret, if you can do all these things, why have you been idle all this long time? You might have been putting Jeannette's wrong things a little right, I think."

"Indeed, I wished to do it," she said earnestly, "but Margot advised me not. She said that if Jeannette and I worked in that confused way together, I doing what she forgot, we could never get on; that I would trust to Jeannette, and Jeannette to me, and so things would be worse than ever. But I do not see why I might not have done a little quietly. What harm could it have done if I had washed the cups and plates over again after Jeannette thought they were clean enough; or if I had put these poor tumbling-about books a little tidy?"

"No harm at all, I think, but a great deal of good. And does old Margot approve of your being Jeannette altogether, if she thinks that you should not help her?"

"I have not asked her. I have been thinking, and thinking about it, but I was afraid to say much lest people might think me conceited and presumptuous. But, indeed," she added earnestly, "it is not conceit. I don't think myself cleverer than Jeannette, only, you know, I can make *myself* take pains and I cannot make *her* do so."

"Oh, yes," said Pierre gaily, "we shall take great pains. But there is one great, very great difficulty; the washing, Margaret, how can you manage that?"

"The little easy things I can manage nicely. I have often helped Jeannette merely for my own amusement, and the large difficult things farmer Michael's Rachel will do for me while I do her sewing work for her."

"But then, poor Margaret, you do so dislike needlework."

"Oh, that can't be helped," she said cheerfully; "that doesn't at all signify; I shall have so much to do that I sha'n't have time to think about what I dislike. When I first made my plans I was a good deal puzzled about the cooking, as I know nothing about it; but now I have settled to ask Jeannette to teach me how to do things. I know she is very anxious to go away to pay a visit to her married sister, and so she will not grudge the trouble of teaching me if that will help her in getting away. She must teach me to cook and to milk the cow."

"No, no," cried Pierre, "she must teach me to do that. I know boys no bigger than I am who always milk the cow for their mothers. And in our mother's story about good Bill, who was such a comfort to his mother, you know, he learned to milk the cow for her when he was quite a little fellow; so I must do that, and take the charge of feeding the poultry and cleaning out their houses. I can surely remember them better than Jeannette does, at any rate."

Arthur had heard only the commencement of this discussion. For some time past his whole attention had been fixed upon his book. He now looked up for a moment to meditate upon some difficult passage, and in doing so his eye fell upon the clock.

"It is late," he remarked. "Time for our father to come home, is it not?"

"To be sure it is," cried Pierre, springing up hastily; "and that tiresome Jeannette not come to prepare supper. Come, Margaret, let us begin our work at once. Do you put right the table and I will bring in the dishes."

Margaret rose immediately. She carefully dusted the little table, and brought it forward to its proper place, in front of Philippe's large arm-chair. Then discarding the soiled and stained napkin, which had already seen too much service, she brought out a snowy white one from Norah's well-filled linen-press, and arranged it on the table with a most mathematical precision. Her next care was to sweep away the crumbs and fragments of breakfast and dinner which still lay scattered upon the floor, so that at least the immediate neighbourhood of their supper-table might be a little cleaner; and, lastly, she dusted the little shelf at Philippe's right hand, on which lay his pipe, tobacco-box, and book.

Pierre had in the meantime, with a good deal of superfluous bustle and clatter, sought out the cleanest of the plates and bowls, and arranged them upon the

table; filled the large jug with milk, and brought out the loaf and cheese.

"Ah!" he said with a sigh, as he placed the last article upon the table, "whenever my father had taken such a long walk as he has to-day, my mother took care to give him a better supper than bread and cheese."

"Did she?" asked Margaret eagerly. "Well, there was some soup left at dinner. It is in a bowl in the pantry. I could heat it up in the little goblet, as I have seen our mother do, when our father was prevented from coming home in time for dinner."

Pierre highly approved of the suggestion. He got down the goblet and cleaned it out for her, and gave her a great deal of sage advice about taking care not to let the soup get singed or smoked. Margaret's first cooking operation was very successful, and by the time the soup was ready, Philippe came in.

He bestowed even more praise upon the children's industry than they had expected, pronounced the soup most excellent, and declared that it quickened his appetite to have once again such a nice clean supper-table to sit down to.

Elated by these praises, Pierre would have dashed at once into the explanation of all their plans, but Margaret checked him. She did not expect to get Philippe's consent at once, and she did not think this a good time for a discussion, so she interrupted Pierre with asking Philippe to tell them about the poor

motherless children whose father he had been visiting. And she contrived to ward off the story during the whole of supper-time by her numerous questions. Pierre was interested in the children also, and gradually forgot the subject which had so deeply engrossed him.

After supper, the boys went up to their room, where they had a few carpenters' tools, and where they were both much interested in constructing the model of a grand new machine which Arthur had been trying to invent. Margaret had counted upon their doing so, and had fixed upon the time of their absence as the most appropriate for bringing forward her petition. She removed the supper things as quickly and as quietly as she could: and finding when she returned to the kitchen that Philippe had not taken up his book, but was sitting in a meditative mood over the fire, she drew in her little stool and sat down to watch for an opportunity of beginning upon the business. She had not to wait long.

"You are very grave and thoughtful to-night, my little queen," he said, looking at her kindly.

"Yes," she answered frankly, "I am thinking about a great thing, a great plan, great at least for me." And she told him all she wished to do.

Philippe smiled a kind, but by no means encouraging smile.

"Bless you, my child," he said, "you don't know what you are talking about. These little hands, that little body, could never get through so much work."

"Oh, but Father Philippe, they could, indeed they could," she said earnestly. "You must not say, you must not think that I cannot do it. I do know what I am talking about. I have thought a great deal about it. And it is not because I fancy that the work will be easy, that I feel so sure that I can do it, but because I know that it is right. If good, good Norah, took such a journey for our sakes, it is, it must be right that I should do all I can to make up for her absence. It is nothing more than right, that I should do *all* I can to please one who has done, and is doing, so much for us, and who loved my own dear Mamma so very much."

Margaret's earnestness fairly choked her. She could not say another word; and she laid her head upon Philippe's knee, to hide the tears called up by the mention of her mother.

Philippe put his hand kindly and caressingly upon her head, as he answered in a soothing tone, that it was quite right to do all she could, but that she wished to undertake too much.

"And was it not too much for Norah to go that long, long journey at this time of the year, in such weather, and through such bad roads?" asked Margaret earnestly, looking up again. "And yet she went. When she told me that she was going, and I tried to persuade her that she could not, she said that she ought to go, and that therefore she could go. She bade me never forget that every one could do what they ought to do.

And I have not forgotten it. It is because I remember it that I am anxious to do this thing."

"But, my little queen, you don't know how to set about these matters."

"Jeannette can teach me some things, and others I can learn for myself. I do not say that I shall be very quick or clever about doing the work, but I *do* say that I will spare no pains to do it perfectly. Mamma has often told me that when Norah first came to be her servant, she knew nothing about a servant's work. But she was *so* determined to succeed, to do every thing perfectly, so resolved never to fail, or be discouraged, that she did succeed, and became the very best servant that could be. And I am quite determined too, and quite, quite sure that I shall succeed."

"Well, my child, I never like to refuse you any thing, and I will let you try, if you promise to give up whenever I think that you are doing too much."

Margaret thanked him gratefully and joyfully, and promised to be quite submissive to his will.

"You won't find it a very easy, nor perhaps a very pleasant task, my queen," he said after some moments' thought. "But you will never regret the exertions you make to accomplish it, if they are the means of teaching you the strength that is to be found in the way of duty, and of giving you the habit of rising up at once to do yourself, what has to be done, instead of seeking for others to do it for you."

"And you know, Father Philippe," she said earnestly, "I must learn that while I am young; because when I am a woman, I shall have to take care of and help Arthur as well as myself."

"You think then Arthur cannot take care of himself?"

"No, he cannot," she answered quite seriously, then added quickly, as she observed Philippe's smile, "but I don't mean that as a fault. God has made him so clever, given him such a great mind, and filled it so full of great high thoughts, that we cannot expect him, we cannot wish him, to think or care about little everyday worldly things. When he is a very great man, and all his thoughts are occupied with grand inventions and discoveries, that will do good to the whole world, then I must be at his side to take care of him, and make him comfortable; and I must work hard to make and to save money, so that he may never have any care or anxiety to distract his mind from these great things."

"But, my queen, do you not care to have your thoughts occupied about great things too?"

"Oh, yes," she cried earnestly, "when I have time I shall catch at them so eagerly. But then, you see, that will not be my place. My work must be to help Arthur. And," she added innocently, "you know I shall be doing a little good to all the world too, though nobody will know it, because Arthur would not be so great nor useful if he had not me to look after these

things, if he were forced to take away his mind from great matters, in order to see to them himself."

"But, Margaret, what if Arthur does not become a great man?"

"Oh, but he must, he is so clever," she cried warmly; "I am sure he must, I have thought of it all, and settled it all."

"But, my child," said Philippe, half reprovingly, "have you forgotten that there is One above, who settles all according to His will? It is right that Arthur should use every exertion to make the most of what God has given him, but yet it may not be God's will that he should succeed, or become a great man, as you call it."

Margaret's eyes filled with tears. She could not bear such a thought. She did not speak for some minutes, and then said quietly, though sadly—

"Well, then, I can at least make him happier, if I am not to have the pleasure of making him greater."

"And you could be contented in that case, Margaret?"

"Yes," she said, fixing her eyes with a calm trusting expression on his face; "whatever God may be pleased not to give me, He will certainly give me contentment if I ask Him."

"Good child, you are quite right," he said, touched by her quiet manner.

"Oh, it was Norah taught me that," she answered, blushing. "When I told her once how I had been

praying that the new medicine might make Mamma quite well, she bade me remember that although we could never feel quite sure that God would grant an earthly blessing we asked for, we might always be sure that He would give us contented, grateful hearts, and make us willing to submit to Him in all things."

Margaret began her duties the following morning. Jeannette was a good deal startled at the first proposal, but by no means sorry to be set free, and she readily undertook to give her all the necessary instructions. But she was a careless teacher, and if Margaret had not been very anxious to learn, I doubt if she could have made much progress under her tuition. But Margaret was very anxious to learn, very anxious to fit herself for the discharge of the duties which she had taken upon her, and she rapidly acquired all the theoretical knowledge which either Jeannette or old Margot could give her. The practical skill and dexterity were more difficult to acquire, but Margaret at least took care that no one but herself should suffer from her deficiency in this respect. If she could not at the same expense of time and labour, do the work as well as Norah did, she was perfectly willing to bestow upon it twice, thrice, or four times the amount of both.

She was constantly mindful of the promise she had made to Philippe, to spare no pains to do everything in the most perfect manner, and constantly mindful too of her promise to her dying mother, to endeavour

to perform even the most trifling duty as in the Lord's sight, and from a regard to His will. She knew that this promise bound her to the most scrupulous faithfulness and painstaking, even in such a matter as sweeping the floor, or dusting the chairs and tables.

She had told Philippe that she was determined to succeed, and she did succeed. The cottage began to assume its old air of cleanliness and comfort, the meals were served with the utmost regularity and neatness, the cooking was at least better than Jeannette's, if not as good as Norah's; and, in short, though Norah's return was still as anxiously longed for by the whole party, her absence was at least no longer such a source of discomfort as it had been.

Margaret was so busy with all her various occupations, that she had not time to remark the great disquietude and anxiety which Norah's prolonged absence was causing to Philippe. They had only received one letter from her, and that was written immediately upon her arrival in Paris. She had written to them a week or so afterwards, to tell them that her stay might be protracted considerably beyond the time that she had anticipated, and to say that she should not write again, as the postage of a letter from Paris was very expensive, and its delivery in that secluded valley very uncertain.

This letter they had never received; and equally unable to account for her silence or for her lengthened absence, Philippe became very seriously uneasy. He felt tempted to leave the children in charge of some of

the neighbours, and set out in search of her. But he was by no means so well informed about the roads as Norah had been, and feared to take a wrong one and so miss her. Still as day passed after day, and no tidings reached him, he became more and more alarmed, and his mind was full of gloomy apprehensions of all kinds of possible and impossible accidents that could have befallen her. But at last when these fears had become almost insupportable, they were happily removed by her safe arrival, way-worn and fatigued, but in excellent health and spirits.

You can imagine the joy and excitement in the cottage that night. It was late in the evening, nearly supper-time, when Norah made her appearance, and the young housekeeper had enough to do,—to help Norah to lay aside her travelling-dress, to get supper ready, to contrive some substantial addition to it for the traveller's sake, and to listen in the intervals to the history Norah was giving of all her adventures.

Quietly and simply as Norah told these adventures, Margaret heard enough to excite her warmest admiration and gratitude, and to fix more deeply upon her memory that maxim which was such a favourite with Norah, and which she said had so helped and strengthened her through all her difficulties—"I can, because I ought."

Amid all the bustle and excitement of her arrival, Norah had not failed to remark upon the neatness and cleanliness of everything about the cottage, and she was

both surprised and pleased to hear to whose exertions they were owing. She did not praise Margaret, but she thanked her with a look and manner which Margaret felt to be more flattering and delightful than the warmest praise.

After the children were gone to bed, Philippe gave his wife all the particulars of his conversation with Margaret upon the occasion of her undertaking these household duties, and told her how much he had been touched by her generous purpose of devoting herself wholly to her brother's happiness.

"Poor Margaret," said Norah, "it seems as if her interests were always to be sacrificed to Arthur's. Even although we leave Sir Charles' allowance to accumulate for many years to come, and add to it all that Margaret and I can make by our needlework, it will not be more than sufficient to pay for Arthur's college education."

"No, it will not; a larger sum will be required in his case than might be in others. Some lads might be sent to college with merely enough to pay for their classes, and might be trusted to support themselves by teaching or writing. But Arthur has not energy for that, poor fellow; and the sum which we set aside for his board and lodging must not be a small one. With his weakness both of body and mind, we cannot suffer him to leave us till we have perfectly provided for his comfort in every way. Nothing can be left for him to do. Norah, your task is not an easy one."

"Only be strong and of a good courage," quoted Norah, looking up into her husband's face with her own peculiar expression of calm trustfulness, an expression which told so truly the quiet strength of her character.

"No one can say that my little wife is deficient in strength or courage," was his smiling answer.

"Well, my strength and courage have been rewarded. Having made so good a beginning, let us not pause now. Let us do all we can, and leave the rest to God."

And Norah did not pause. As soon as she was fairly settled at home, she began to carry into effect all the plans she had formed. Her first business was to explain to Arthur and Margaret all she meant to do, and all she required from them. But in this she met with an unexpected difficulty.

Arthur was for once aroused from his usual abstracted, dreamy state of mind. He remonstrated warmly against the injustice of appropriating all his uncle's allowance to his use, and it required all Norah's eloquence and powers of persuasion to prevail upon him to consent.

Margaret had been sacrificing herself for him, he said, ever since he could recollect; when they were mere children she was always required to give up every comfort or pleasure to him, and was always most generously willing to do so. But he could suffer it no longer; it would be mean, unjust, and unmanly to consent to this arrangement.

"I am glad that you feel as you do, dear Arthur," said Norah, after she had with great difficulty succeeded in convincing him that he could provide for Margaret much better by this plan than by any other. "I am glad to hear you say all this; and while I wish to persuade you, even for Margaret's sake, to accept of this temporary sacrifice from her, I will frankly confess that I have thought you deficient in that manliness and energy which should make you eager to protect and help your sister, instead of receiving help and protection from her. I am not at all afraid that you will render her sacrifice useless by any idleness or any want of attention or application to your studies. I am quite sure you will study as hard as any one could wish, probably much harder. But, dear Arthur, you should remember that no man can expect to succeed in any undertaking without a certain degree of manly courage, energy, and determination, and in these I think you are deficient."

"I know it, Norah, I know it," said the boy sadly, "and I feel as if I must be a poor, weak, dependent child all my life."

"You have more strength than you think, dear Arthur," she said cheerfully, "only labour as earnestly and diligently after courage and fortitude as you do after learning; only study the best way of supplying the deficiencies of your character as diligently as you do mathematics, and I have no fear for you. Strengthen your body by taking more regular exercise, by being more out of doors, and your mind will benefit also.

Make some rule for yourself about this, and I will take care that you keep it."

"Well, then, I promise to work with Pierre in the garden or field for two hours every forenoon, and to walk with Margaret every day at any time you please," he said with unusual decision.

"That is a brave boy," said Norah approvingly. "And you shall have the pleasure of being of use to Margaret in another way. If we cannot afford to give her a school education, we must give her as good a home one as possible. You may teach her some of your lessons every day. Although they are not quite the usual studies for young ladies, still she had better be learning them than learning nothing. And while we are working for you, you shall read to us some of these books of history, and the biographies of great men which we kept for your use, when your father's books were sold."

Arthur's eye brightened at this proposal. It cheered him to think that he might hereafter be able to offer Margaret a comfortable if not a luxurious home, and it was still more cheering to feel that he was of use to her even now; and of use to the good and kind Norah and Philippe, for at his request Pierre was also to be his pupil.

He entered upon his new occupation with an energy quite unusual to him, and persevered in it with really commendable patience. For his patience was sometimes pretty severely tried. Not by Margaret; she

was a most enthusiastic scholar; she had a real love of learning, and enjoyed her lessons almost as much as she disliked needlework. But Pierre, though quick and very intelligent, was a sadly heedless pupil, and often vexed his young master very seriously by his inattention and forgetfulness. Still Arthur persevered bravely, irksome as he felt it to have to repeat the same thing so often over, and to spend so much time in explaining lessons which seemed so very simple to him as to require no explanation at all. And probably Arthur derived more benefit from the performance of this duty, than he could have done had it been more agreeable to his taste.

In the meantime Norah was prosecuting her part with her usual cheerful unremitting industry; employing every interval of leisure in getting on with her work, having always some piece conveniently at hand ready to be taken up at every idle moment.

And Margaret too was very industrious. I cannot say, poor child! that she had acquired any great liking for her work, but she had at least acquired considerable skill. In the fine knitted articles, and in the coarser parts of the embroidery, her workmanship was quite as good as Norah's, and the two worked harmoniously together. Margaret saved Norah's more valuable time by doing the easy parts of her work, while Norah finished off the more difficult and intricate parts of Margaret's. In this way they went steadily on, finishing one article after another, and laying them

away in the depository appropriated to them, without ever pausing to calculate how much they had done, or how much they must still do.

If any one had commented to Norah upon her apparent indifference in this respect, her answer would have been—

"I am to do what I can, and that is a limit which has no connexion with calculations as to the quantity already finished or still to be begun. So why should I waste my time in making such calculations?"

But you must not suppose that Norah neglected her other duties in order to advance this favourite project. All her household matters were as carefully attended to as ever; her husband's comfort as sedulously cared for; as constant a watchfulness maintained over the children's character and conduct; their welfare, happiness, and even amusement, as diligently considered and provided for; and she was as ready and willing as ever for any work of charity that might present itself.

Philippe and Norah were indeed great benefactors in that quiet district. They were considerably better off than most of their neighbours, and were as willing as they were able to give assistance to all who needed it. "I am to do what I can," might be said to be Norah's limit in her acts of neighbourly kindness, in her endeavours to succour the needy, the sick, or the afflicted, as well as in other things. She never thought of asking, "Have I done as much as others? Have I done as much as could be expected, or as much as they

would have done to me?" The only sentence which could satisfy her conscience, or could console her under failure in her attempts to relieve, was the simple one, "I have done what I could."

And Margaret was rapidly learning to apply this other saying of Norah's, as she had done the one which forms the title to this chapter. Did some lesson seem too difficult to be ever learned, or some task too long to be ever finished, "I am to do what I can," encouraged her to use her utmost exertions to overcome the difficulty whatever it might be. And did I do what I could? silenced her self-deceiving excuses in any failure of duty.

And so we shall leave our party for two years, which passed on quietly and comfortably, without any considerable event occurring to break the even tenor of their way.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW FRIENDS.

It is towards the end of the second year after Mr. Cecil's death. Arthur is now a tall and very handsome boy of sixteen. He has made great, I might say extraordinary progress in his studies, considering that he has received no assistance except what could be derived from books. His body is certainly stronger, but I am not sure that he has gained much strength of mind. At one time he did appear more constantly cheerful, and more capable of exertion than he used to be, but that spark of increasing vigour and energy has faded again within the last few months.

As time passes on, every little event that occurs in which he is called upon to play a part, every little indication of his character and feelings which is called forth, only bring fresh conviction to Norah and Philippe of the truth of Margaret's remark, that he will never be able to take care of himself. They are now beginning to doubt the feasibility of their plans for his education; to question the propriety of sending such a delicate, sensitive creature away from their own protecting care.

These doubts and fears have never been communicated to the young people. Until they had come to a decision upon the matter, Norah thought it a pity to say anything to them that could discourage them in the exertions they were making for the advancement of this plan.

And Margaret at least was more sanguine of success than ever. She had this year been greatly encouraged by the large sum which they had realized from the sale of their needlework. An opportunity had occurred of sending it up to Paris to Norah's kind friend the water carrier's wife, and she had been able to dispose of it to much greater advantage than Monsieur Duverger could have done. This had given a fresh stimulus to Margaret's industry, and fresh strength to her hopes. She, too, had made great progress in her studies. She was better able to appreciate Arthur's proficiency, and she was impatient for the time to arrive when that proficiency should be known to others, when Arthur should distinguish himself in the eyes of the whole world.

But while she was thus surely counting upon the fulfilment of all her hopes, Norah thought she could see that with Arthur it was quite otherwise. He had never of late expressed any satisfaction at the prospect of going to college, but on the contrary one or two expressions had escaped him which implied some dread, if not dislike of the plan. Norah had for two years been constantly labouring to arouse him out of his habits

of absence and abstraction of mind, and she had partly succeeded. But she suspected that in proportion as he became more observant of outward events, he became more conscious of his own weakness, and was inclined to shrink more apprehensively from the prospect of ever being left to his own resources.

Should this turn out to be the case, it would at once decide the question, for with Arthur's sensitive disposition, when once his courage began to fail, he must, when far away from those upon whom he had been accustomed to depend, sink from one stage of despondency and self-distrust to another, until he became wholly unfit for any exertion.

In the meantime, until they had quite ascertained the state of his feelings, Philippe and Norah were quietly prosecuting the plans they had marked out, waiting patiently for some more certain sign as to the course they ought to pursue, and praying earnestly and constantly for guidance and wisdom from above.

About the beginning of December in this year, the whole valley was thrown into a most unusual state of excitement by the intelligence that the old chateau was to be again inhabited. Monsieur Duverger had received a letter from Count S—, its proprietor, begging him to go over occasionally to look after the operations of some workmen whom he was going to send to put the place into thorough repair, in preparation for the arrival of some English friends of his, who were going to reside there during the winter.

The speedy arrival of said workmen put the matter beyond all doubt, and for some time that quiet deserted spot was a scene of bustle and industry. Whether the residence of the strangers among them was to prove a benefit to the poor peasantry or not, the preparations for their arrival certainly were; every one who could or would work, was employed by the superintendent of the workmen, who was constantly receiving messages from the Count to hasten his operations, as the family were very impatient to take possession.

And they really seemed to be very impatient. Before the last workmen had left, a butler and a housekeeper arrived to put the house in order. The butler was English, but the housekeeper was a gay, chattering Frenchwoman. She went a good deal about among the cottagers arranging for the family being supplied with milk, butter, eggs, &c., and they easily obtained from her all the information concerning the family which she herself possessed.

The family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Bailey, their two sons, and a sister of Mr. Bailey's. Mr. Bailey was a clergyman of the Church of England. His wife had been threatened with consumption, and had been ordered to spend the ensuing winter and spring in the south of France. They had at first gone to one of the usual places of resort for patients of this class. But Mrs. Bailey did not like it. There was too much bustle, and the sight of so many invalids had a most depressing effect upon her spirits. They had been looking about

for some place in the country, but without success, when they accidentally met Count S—, with whom they had been well acquainted many years before, when he had passed a year or two in England. They had shown him great kindness during a long illness he had had, and he was most anxious to repay it now. As soon as he understood their situation and wishes, he offered them the use of his chateau, and undertook to have it put into thorough repair for them. In every respect but one it seemed a most desirable place. The situation was dry and sheltered, the scenery around very beautiful, the peasantry quiet and peaceable, and what was a great recommendation to the Baileys, they were almost all Protestants.

But the distance from medical advice seemed at first an insuperable objection. They were however reconciled to it by their medical attendant himself. He thought much more favourably of Mrs. Bailey's case than the English doctors had done. He looked forward most sanguinely to her perfect recovery, and he considered the gratification of her wishes and feelings as a most important step towards it. If she attended scrupulously to his directions about diet, exposure to cold, &c., he believed, he said, that a doctor's visits would be quite unnecessary; but if they were required, there was a very skilful practitioner at the nearest town, within sixteen miles of the chateau. He promised to pay them a visit himself in two months, and if he then saw cause to change his opinion of her case,

they could come back to their present abode. And so the matter was decided, and in a wonderfully short time after the first proposal of the plan, they were all comfortably settled at the chateau.

The appearance and manners of the whole family were very prepossessing. Mrs. Bailey was seldom seen, as she could not venture beyond the sunny terrace in the garden, but the rest of the family had soon made acquaintance with all their neighbours, and showed very plainly, that one of the first wishes of their hearts was to do good to all with whom they came in contact.

The sons, two fine, frank, intelligent lads of thirteen and fourteen, were constantly going about among the people, chattering freely in their imperfect French, laughing good-humouredly at their own mistakes, and making themselves quite at home; and Mr. Bailey and his sister had not been in the place a fortnight before they had become acquainted with all the circumstances of every family near; with all their wants and sorrows, and had already done much to help those who needed help.

I said *every* family, but I ought to have excepted Philippe Chantal's. Although his cottage was nearer the chateau than any other, it did not lie in the way of any of their walks. Then there was an air of superiority about the cottage and its inhabitants, a sort of reserve and dignity in Norah's manner and appearance, which made Mr. and Miss Bailey feel that an uninvited visit might be intrusive. They heard about her in every

cottage they entered, heard grateful praises of her kindness and goodness, pleasing anecdotes of her generosity and disinterestedness, and the whole history of the two orphan children whom she had adopted.

And all this naturally awakened a considerable desire to become acquainted with her; but for some weeks that desire was ungratified. They never chanced to meet any of the family in their walks, never saw them except at church. Miss Bailey used laughingly to complain that there was some fatality against their meeting. If she called to see a sick woman, Norah Chantal had been there about an hour before. If she went to comfort the poor mother whose baby had died, Norah came just five minutes after Miss Bailey went away. And all those disappointments only strengthened the desire she had to see and converse with her.

The boys, Frederick and James Bailey, were the first who made the acquaintance. They lost their way in one of their long rambles through the woods, and were speculating upon the probability of never finding it again, when their uneasiness was relieved by the sound of approaching footsteps, and presently they saw Margaret and Arthur Cecil coming down one of the side glades towards them. The Cecils had purposed going in a contrary direction, but as soon as they understood the dilemma in which the boys were placed, they offered to guide them to the edge of the wood, and the four set out together.

Arthur was as usual shy, reserved, and silent; but

after the first little awkwardness was over, Margaret was as frank, as ready to talk and make friends, as the boys could be. They were in a state of most pleasurable excitement. That they should be the first to meet, converse, and become acquainted with the very people about whom their papa and aunt had been talking so much, and whom they had so long vainly desired to know! They felt themselves an inch or two taller, and many years older at the bare thought of it.

Then they found that Margaret could speak English as fluently as they could, and there was a peculiar pleasure in having once again a companion of their own age to whom they could talk as fast as they liked in their own familiar native tongue, without having to pause to recollect this French word, or that peculiar phrase.

There was a charm to the Cecils, too, in this intercourse with young people, in what might be called their own rank of life. They naturally felt a curiosity about the habits and pursuits, the employments and amusements which should have been their own, and this curiosity the Baileys were quite ready to satisfy. They described freely their way of spending the day, their lessons, their diversions, everything they thought their new friends could care for, or in which they themselves were interested.

Arthur sighed as he heard them speak of the library, books, engravings, models of machines, a chemical apparatus, and all the pleasures of that kind of which

he had dreamed but had never tasted. And Margaret was excited to boast in her turn of the extraordinary talents and attainments of her dear, clever Arthur. Her young auditors heard her with a most flattering degree of wondering admiration. They felt breathless with astonishment when she told of the books he had read;—books which they had seen their papa read, into which they had perhaps peeped, and been bewildered by the very sight of their diagrams and figures;—and yet Arthur had read and understood them all. Arthur, who had never been out of this quiet obscure valley; who had never been at school, had a tutor, or in short any advantages. They began to look up to him with a sort of timid respect and reverence. And much as they had enjoyed their walk, they almost wished themselves at home, so eager were they to narrate these wonders.

But the pleasures of this walk were not yet over. As they came out of the wood they passed close behind Philippe's cottage, and Norah hearing Margaret's voice, came out to inquire if any accident had occurred to send them home so much sooner than they had intended. Margaret explained. Norah spoke to the boys in her own peculiarly pleasant, kindly way; warned them of the danger of really losing themselves in these woods, and invited them to come for one of her young people whenever they wanted a guide in any of their long walks.

Nothing could be more delightful than this invitation. Frederick and James had been longing to propose an-

other walk, but had been deterred by the respect they felt for Arthur's greater age and superior attainments. Now they eagerly asked permission to accompany them the following day, and then went home to pour out the astonishing history of their adventures.

Mr. Bailey was not a person to hear without interest all that his boys had to tell of the extraordinary talents and industry of their new friend. His first impulse was to seek the boy in order that he might judge for himself if their account was exaggerated or not, and that he might find out in what way he could help him in the farther prosecution of his studies. But he was deterred from this by Frederick and James' description of Arthur's extreme reserve. He thought it better to wait quietly, to leave the young people alone, and to allow their acquaintanceship to advance gradually and naturally into intimacy, before he attempted to gain the shy boy's confidence.

In the meantime this eventful walk was the means of making the elders of the two families acquainted as well as the youngers. Norah and Miss Bailey soon became very intimate. Miss Bailey found Norah's thorough knowledge of all the circumstances and characters of the poor around them so very useful, her shrewd good sense made her such an excellent counsellor in all the plans she wished to set agoing for their benefit, that she soon began to think that she could do nothing, and decide upon nothing, until she had consulted with her. Scarcely a day passed in which she did not find it necessary to

go to Norah's cottage, and every visit made her feel a deeper interest, a higher respect and admiration for this new friend.

Norah, on her side, was equally pleased with Miss Bailey. There was an earnestness, a simplicity, and straightforwardness in her character which exactly suited Norah's taste. Their thoughts and feelings upon all the most important points were so entirely similar, they agreed so thoroughly upon almost every topic which they discussed, that it was natural that they should feel a mutual satisfaction in each other's society. That Norah should be as much pleased to hear Miss Bailey's footstep coming up to the door, as Miss Bailey was to discover, that she really must go to get Norah's opinion about this poor child, that old man, or the other sick woman.

As they became more intimate, Norah told her new friend the whole history of her adopted children, confided to her all her plan for them, all her doubts and difficulties, all her hopes and fears, and was greatly strengthened by Miss Bailey's warm interest and sympathy, and by her assurances of her brother's willingness to advise and assist them to the utmost of his power.

Hitherto neither Mr. nor Miss Bailey had seen much of Arthur and Margaret. They never happened to be at home when they were at the cottage, and Norah and Philippe had agreed to resist all invitations for their young people to go to the chateau. They dreaded the effect that the sight of comfort, luxuries, and plea-

sures, which naturally ought to have been his, might have upon Arthur's somewhat morbid mind. They feared that he might perhaps despise and neglect the advantages he possessed, if he saw the superior ones enjoyed by the young Baileys. They thought that even Frederick and James' descriptions of these things had made him more depressed and melancholy, less disposed to exert himself than he used to be.

And in this they were not mistaken; indeed, the mischief was even greater than they feared. Arthur was becoming thoroughly dispirited and heartless about his studies. The melancholy produced by the contrast between his situation and that of his new friends, rendered him quite unfit for every exertion, and he had already confided to Margaret his intention of giving up all attempt to educate himself, his total despair of success.

Poor Margaret was greatly grieved and perplexed. She did not like to speak to Norah and Philippe about it: they might think Arthur ungrateful for all their efforts, all their generous self-denial. And she knew, she told herself, that he was not ungrateful; he was only, and had always been, such a fearing creature. He never had had strength to hope or to fight on with difficulties, and she much feared he never should have. She must do all that for him both now and hereafter, when they should be grown up and gone into the world. She tried hard to put some of her own hopeful, strong spirit into him, tried to argue down his fears. With a patience which was extraordinary in one of her disposition, she

listened day after day with the same gentle sympathy to the same desponding assertions, and endeavoured day after day to convince him of their falsity, to induce him to look on the brighter side of things. But it was in vain; all her arguments and entreaties were useless. Arthur would not or could not hope.

He was a weak, useless creature, he said; he had been so all his life, and he never could be anything better. The only thing which could give him the least comfort or satisfaction was to be allowed to tell Norah and Philippe that they need no longer labour and deny themselves for his sake, but must now leave him to his fate, which was to be a burden and encumbrance to others all his life.

Margaret entreated him to have at least a little patience. She begged him to wait only a week, only three or four days, before he gave up *all* hope, before he *quite* determined to be "left to his fate," and to become "a burden and encumbrance." And having gained a promise to that effect, she set herself anxiously to consider whether there was no one who could do what she had failed in, who could give her poor, fearing Arthur, a little hope, a little strength.

The only person who presented himself to her mind was Mr. Bailey, and to him she determined to apply It was a bold step. Margaret felt that it was, but she was not afraid to take it. She believed that there was nothing wrong in it, and she had strong hopes of success. Frederick and James had told her so much

about their father's cleverness and great learning, she felt sure that he would be able to devise some means of helping them, of showing them how they could help themselves. And she knew how kind and good he was to the poor, surely he could not refuse to do what he could for her in such a distress. At any rate, she was quite determined to try.

The day which she fixed upon for carrying her resolution into practice happened to be the very one upon which Miss Bailey had heard with such deep interest Norah's story of her foster-sister and her children. Miss Bailey had repeated the story to her brother as soon as she reached home, so that he was well prepared to listen with interest to Margaret's humble petition for assistance.

The whole party of young people, including Pierre, had set out upon an extra long walk that afternoon. That Pierre was with them, made Margaret feel less scruple in deserting her companions. She accompanied them about half the distance they proposed to go, and then told them that she was going to leave them and return alone. They remonstrated and entreated, for she was too great a favourite to be easily parted with; but she was firm. She told them that she had something to do, which she had resolved, if possible, to do that day. This resolution she could not keep, unless they allowed her to return now, and so they must not oppose her. And they felt that it was indeed useless to oppose. She was at all times the most decided of

the party, and upon what she thought a question of duty, it was impossible to make her yield. They suffered her to go, although they declared that her doing so deprived the walk of half its pleasure.

Margaret's heart beat quickly when she found herself in the court of the chateau. She was depressed and discouraged by a vague fear that she might be doing wrong in acting thus independently, in concealing her intentions from her good and kind Norah, and for a few minutes she hesitated whether to go on or not. But she persuaded herself that there could be nothing wrong. It was not for herself she was going to ask the favour. And her only motive for concealment was to spare Norah and Philippe the pain of fancying that Arthur was ungrateful. And so she went on.

She has gone up to the door, has made her humble petition that she may be allowed to speak to Mr. Bailey for a few minutes, and is standing in the hall waiting for an answer, endeavouring to gather up all her courage, and to recollect the fine speech which she had composed for the occasion, and which she has been repeating to herself twenty times a day, for the last two or three days. But not one word or idea of it can she recall. Her mind is in such a whirl with the thought of days past, which the sight of every well remembered object brings back, and with anxious anticipations of the approaching interview. The servant comes back to lead her to the library. Mr. Bailey is

there alone. Margaret feels disappointed and frightened; she had hoped that Miss Bailey might be with him. She had never spoken to him in her life, and he looks so grave and serious, almost stern, she thinks. His kind and gentle manner, however, as he asks her what she wishes to say to him, recalls her courage, and she plunges boldly, though somewhat incoherently, into the business.

"I only wanted to ask you, Sir, if you could," she said hurriedly, "that is, I thought I should like to tell you about my Arthur—Arthur Cecil—my brother, Sir, I mean. He is so clever, so very clever, every one says so. And my own poor papa, who knew all about mathematics, and these things, said that he was quite a genius. And so we thought that we ought to try to get him a college education; and we have kept up the money that our uncle gives us, and we have worked hard to make it more, and we thought it would soon be enough. But then, Sir, poor Arthur, it is so difficult to make him hope. Indeed, Sir, I cannot do it. And if he cannot hope, you know, he can never learn all the hard things he must learn. He cannot, you know, without hope go on by himself, until we can send him to college, and so I thought I would come and —and—ask you, if—if," and she stopped abruptly, overwhelmed at the thought of her own boldness.

Mr. Bailey smiled kindly and encouragingly. With the assistance of the somewhat clearer history he had just heard from his sister, he perfectly understood Mar-

garet's broken statement, and thought he could guess her wishes, but he wished her to speak for herself, in order that he might better understand her, and her brother's character, so he merely said very kindly—

"Well, my dear, what do you wish me to do? Don't be afraid. Come here beside me, and tell me boldly all you wish."

"But I am afraid you may think me forward and presuming," she said, blushing deeply as she obeyed him, and went close up to his chair. "And I am sure I do not mean to be so.—I wish to do right."

"I can quite believe that, my dear little girl. If your request is an improper one, I shall tell you so, as I should do to one of my own children. But whatever it may be, I promise not to blame you for having made it. I am sure you are influenced by a right feeling, the kind anxiety of an affectionate sister to help her brother."

"Yes, Sir, that is it indeed," she said earnestly. "You see the one thing I have to do is to help Arthur, both now and afterwards when we are grown up, and have no one but ourselves to trust to. If he cannot get hope and strength for himself, I *must* try to get it for him. And if you could be so very good as to lend him one or two books of the kind he ought to learn. And, perhaps, perhaps," hesitating and blushing still more deeply, "if you could sometimes, if it were not too much trouble for you, explain the difficult parts to him, it would encourage him to go on."

"No, my dear," he said very kindly, "I should not think it too much trouble. Indeed I had been planning something of this kind before I saw you to-day. I have heard of Arthur's great talents, and have felt anxious to help him. If he will promise to be attentive and diligent, I will give him regular lessons for an hour or two every day."

"Attentive and diligent! Oh, Sir, you do not know Arthur," she cried, her eyes dancing with joy. "If he can only get some hope of succeeding in the end, he would never weary of lessons. And he is so clever, so very clever. But what can I say to you? I have quite forgotten to thank you for your goodness to my dear Arthur. But indeed, indeed, Sir, I am *so* grateful though I cannot say it. I could cry with gratitude and joy. Only I wish I could tell you something of it. I wish I could find words."

"Your joy and gratitude are pretty manifest without words," he said smiling. "But, Margaret, are you not too sanguine? You know I shall probably leave this place early in summer. Arthur cannot have the benefit of my instructions very long. And do you think there is no danger of his relapsing into despondency when I go away; of his again becoming unable to exert himself, and to go on with his studies unassisted?"

"I have thought of all that," she said gravely. "And I think our only plan is to work more busily than ever, to work very hard to get the money made up soon;—so soon, as that he shall not have time to

lose hope and strength again before he is able to go to college."

"Can you work harder than you do already, my child?"

"Oh, yes, if Norah will allow me to sit up a little later at night and to rise earlier; and not to go out these long walks, but to spend the two or three hours I waste upon them in working. There is the time taken up with my lessons too, there is no necessity for my learning lessons."

"And *you* do not care for learning, although Arthur does."

"Oh, indeed, indeed, I do, I wish so much to learn, and to know about so many things. But then it is not necessary. The work I have to do, is to help Arthur, and I can do that without learning lessons."

"You feel very certain about that being your appointed work, my child."

"Oh, yes, quite certain," she answered, looking up at him with grave earnestness. "God has made him weak, and unable to help himself; He has made me strong, and able to help him. He has left us in the world alone, without father or mother, brother or sister. He must mean me to do all I can for him, to make up to him for what he wants in himself."

"Who taught you to think and reason in this way, Margaret?"

"It was Norah, my good, good Norah," she answered gratefully. "She teaches me all I know. She is so

good, so very good, and she loves us, oh! so dearly. She will be very very happy to hear how much you mean to do for Arthur. Could you come and tell them about it to-day?" she added a little timidly. "I should like them to know it soon."

"No, my good child, you shall have the pleasure of telling the news as a reward for your exertions on your brother's behalf. Tell Arthur to come up to me to-morrow at ten, that I may examine him as to what he has already learned."

Margaret thanked him again for his kindness, and then departed on her joyful errand. It was indeed a joyful errand. Every member of the little household was rendered happy by it. All Arthur's despondency was gone. He became more animated and cheerful than he had ever been seen to be before, and like Margaret could find no words to express his joy and thankfulness.

"Was it wrong to keep my intention secret from you, Norah?" asked Margaret, when she and Norah were left alone the following morning.

"I do not like secrets at all, my dear," was Norah's answer.

"I only did not wish you to think Arthur ungrateful. And then I knew, that is, I hoped, that there was nothing wrong in what I did."

"I do not mean to blame you, my child. I dare say your feelings were natural; and I know your concealment proceeded from no selfish or unworthy motive.

But I think, dear Margaret, you might have trusted to my love for Arthur, and not have feared that I should easily suspect him of ingratitude."

"I see," said Margaret, blushing ingenuously, "that it was foolish and presumptuous to imagine that I could read Arthur's mind better than you could. But I did not think of this before."

"No, you saw a way by which you thought you could help Arthur, and you were so intent upon following it, that you had time to think of nothing else. And that was all very natural. I only wished to tell you, that in all cases it is wisest and best for children, or," smiling, "if I must not say that, for young people, to be quite frank and open with those who have the charge of them. But see, Margaret, who is that coming down the wood-path?"

"Arthur!" she cried, throwing down her work; "and I must run to meet him. I am so very anxious to hear how he got on."

Arthur had got on most excellently. Shy and sensitive as he was, he had shown no timidity, no embarrassment, during his examination. He had no vain desire to show off his proficiency, or to make Mr. Bailey think it greater than it really was. He was only anxious that he should find out exactly how much he knew already, in order that he might know better what instructions to give him. This simple, honest desire for improvement, gave a manliness and openness to his manner, which both surprised and pleased Mr.

Bailey. They were so different from the shyness and embarrassment which he had expected to find. He began to feel much more deeply interested in the boy for his own sake; he found it an easy and a pleasant task to teach one so talented, and at the same time so humble, one who was so ready to confess when he did not understand, and whose whole mind seemed intent upon the subject of his studies, to the total exclusion of all self-seeking and self-conceit.

And the more he saw of Arthur, the more interested he became in him, the more attached to him. The great weakness and sensitiveness of his character were apt to raise a feeling of contempt in the minds of those who knew him only slightly. But there was a humility, gentleness, and simplicity about him, which greatly endeared him to every one who became at all intimate with him. The two hours' lessons were gradually lengthened out to three, and sometimes to four, and neither master nor pupil ever thought them too long.

But while he was thus delightfully engaged with his new studies, Arthur did not allow himself to be so much engrossed by them as to forget his other duties—the duties he had taken upon himself as Margaret's and Pierre's tutor; for I hope you have too high an opinion of Norah's discretion to suppose that she would agree to Margaret's proposal, that she should give up her lessons and walks in order to get on faster with her work. Arthur often found that it required a considerable effort of self-denial to lay aside his own more in-

teresting studies to attend to his pupils, or to interrupt Mr. Bailey in the middle of some very delightful lesson, by the announcement that he must go home to give them their lessons. But it was a self-denial which he always practised, and he was not unrewarded. He returned to his own pursuits with fresh zest and animation after such an interruption, and he was unconsciously raising himself in Mr. Bailey's good opinion by this conscientious discharge of his duty.

Both Mr. and Miss Bailey had felt anxious to extend to Margaret the privileges which her brother was enjoying, but they had been unable to do so to the extent they wished. Before leaving England, Mr. Bailey had undertaken to furnish a series of papers upon a very difficult subject, for a scientific journal, and the study and preparation of these occupied him so fully, that he could not spare more time than he already gave to Arthur. Miss Bailey's forenoons were fully occupied with the necessary attentions to the invalid, corresponding with their numerous friends in England, with assisting her brother in instructing the boys, copying his manuscripts, or acting as his ambassador to the cottages of the sick and suffering. All they could do for her was to lend her books, and to advise her as to what studies she should attend to.

Hitherto her education had been very irregular. Arthur had made her an excellent Latin scholar, a first-rate arithmetician, and had given her a considerable knowledge of mathematics. But she was totally igno-

rant of even the elements of English or French grammar, and knew nearly nothing of geography. Arthur had read a good deal of history aloud to her and Norah as they worked, but they had been obliged to take the books they could get, and their course of reading had been very desultory. Margaret's knowledge of some periods was most perfect, while she was totally ignorant of the connecting and intervening links.

In all these disadvantages, of course, Arthur shared. For they had been caused not by Mrs. Cecil's or Norah's ignorance of what the children should learn, but from the total want of all proper books. Not all the persuasions or arguments of his new friends could induce Arthur to attend to these matters now, his whole mind was engrossed with his favourite mathematics; but Margaret showed extraordinary patience and perseverance in learning those elementary lessons which can never be very interesting, and which must have appeared peculiarly tiresome to her, far advanced as she in many respects was.

"You are very anxious to learn everything, Margaret," observed Miss Bailey one day when she had been examining her as to her progress in English grammar.

"Oh, very anxious indeed," was her earnest reply.

"And for what end, Margaret?"

"For what end?" She looked puzzled.

"I mean," explained Miss Bailey, "what use do you intend to make of what you learn? What makes you so very anxious to get on?"

"Oh, I want to learn, to know, to understand," she said eagerly, "to get my mind made larger and filled full of thoughts."

"Well, my dear," said Miss Bailey approvingly. "that is the wisest end you can have in learning. I asked the question because I fancied that you might perhaps have formed some plan of fitting yourself to be a governess, or something of that kind."

"Oh no, no, that would never do, you know; I have got to take care of Arthur. I am to be his housekeeper, his nurse, his servant; to take care of him, to work for him, and to make him comfortable."

"And to be his companion and friend," added Miss Bailey. "The more you learn now, you will be the more able to share in his pursuits, and to take an interest in his occupations."

"Yes, and Norah says that what I learn now will help me to be contented and cheerful, however disagreeably I may be situated. Oh, we have planned it all; if Arthur is obliged to live in some of those large towns, where, Norah says, there is so much noise and dirt, where we can see nothing but ugly houses, and hear nothing but the rumbling of carts and carriages; then, when I am wearied of it all, as I daresay I shall be sometimes, when I long to see once more the green grass, the blue sky and its silver clouds, to watch the light and shades in the woods, and the sunbeams dancing upon the water, or to hear the song of the lark, the cooing of the wood-pigeon, and the shivering of the

leaves in the summer winds, then I shall think of all the beautiful, beautiful poetry you have given me to read—some of it I can remember every word of—and I shall forget how far I am from all these pleasures."

"And be quite contented?"

"I hope so—I think so. It is not only the pleasure that the eye has in seeing those lovely sights, or the ear in hearing those sweet sounds, that makes them so very delightful to us. The thoughts and feelings they bring into our minds are the best parts of these pleasures. Are they not?"

"I think they are; and I think with you that we can enjoy this better part, even when the sights and sounds are themselves far away. So it is to poetry you mean to look for amusement in those dull hours?"

"Not alone, not always. Sometimes when I shall have some long tiresome piece of work to do, and am so wearied, oh! so very wearied of it, and so restless that I feel as if I cannot go on, then I shall think of some of those difficult things that Arthur is so fond of. I shall go over all the long reasonings and facts he sometimes teaches me about astronomy, or natural philosophy, and so I shall forget my weariedness, and the length of time I have to sit still, and shall feel quite contented and cheerful. Oh, there are many different kinds of things one can think about, if one can only get one's mind well filled."

"Yes, and almost any subject will help you, so that it only calls away your mind from yourself, and your

own little grievances and vexations. But, Margaret, have you thought how the learning of these tiresome grammar rules is to help you in these things?"

"No," she answered simply, "I do not understand that. But you tell me, and Norah and Mr. Bailey tell me, that it is right and best that I should learn them, and so I trust to you, because you know better than I do. But if I do not know what good they are to do me in the end, I know what good they are doing me now."

"In what way?" Miss Bailey asked, much interested.

"They are teaching me a lesson I *must* learn some time. To go on learning because I ought to learn, reading because I ought to read, where I do not care for or like what I am learning or reading. That is a lesson which all Arthur's dearly beloved mathematics could never teach me, because they are so very interesting in themselves. And so I make myself contented to go on with these tiresome rules, even although I cannot see their use."

"You are a wise as well as a good girl," said Miss Bailey kindly, "and I think I may promise you that you shall some time or other find a full reward for all the self-denial you are now practising, in the self-command which it will give you, in the power which you will acquire of turning your thoughts to whatever subject you please, of fixing your attention upon what you wish to do."

During the last two or three months of the Baileys'

sojourn at the chateau, Margaret held many conversations like the foregoing with her new friend. Both Miss Bailey and Norah thought that Margaret was too intent upon her work. She was growing fast. They feared that she might injure her health, by sitting still in the house for so many hours at a time, as she wished to do, and they were constantly contriving plans for sending her out, and procuring for her a change of occupation.

At one time Miss Bailey wanted her as a guide to a distant cottage, at another to show her the part of the wood where some particular view was to be seen, or some particular plant to be found. Then Mrs. Bailey had amused herself in the cold weather with learning the fine knitting in which Norah and Margaret excelled; and she often sent to beg Margaret to come up for an hour or two to put her work right, or to teach her a new stitch.

Both the ladies enjoyed Margaret's frank, open conversation. She was so fresh, so simple, so true, and so very much in earnest, altogether so different from the generality of girls at her age, that it was like reading some new and very interesting story, to hear the expression of her thoughts and feelings, and to watch the development of her character.

And to Margaret these conversations were a source of very great enjoyment. It was so pleasant to speak of her dear Mamma to such interested and sympathizing auditors; to describe her goodness and gentleness, to

make them love and admire her, as she deserved to be loved and admired.

Miss Bailey had introduced her to the hitherto unexplored region of poetry. She had lent her some of the works of our best poets, and Margaret's enthusiastic delight, as this new field of thought was opened out to her, her intense enjoyment and thorough appreciation of all the beauties which it disclosed, surpassed Miss Bailey's highest expectations. This became a new and strong tie between them, a new and unfailing subject of conversation in their rambles through the woods, or during the forenoons which Margaret passed at the chateau. Margaret could not decide whether she enjoyed most the reading her favourite passages to Norah, to whom they were as new and as delightful as to her, or the talking them over with Miss Bailey, to whom they were old and familiar friends.

But now these pleasant walks and talks were drawing to a close. The time was at hand when the Baileys must leave the valley. Mrs. Bailey's health and strength had improved greatly during the last two months; so much so as to render it very probable that she might be able to remain in England during the next winter. But with this view, it was necessary that they should return there in the very beginning of summer. They had already staid much longer than they had proposed, much longer than was prudent. They liked this quiet, peaceful spot. They were attached to the orderly grateful peasantry, to whom

their visit had been such a blessing. They had no positive call of duty to take them home, for Mr. Bailey's living being in a very cold damp situation, to which his wife could never safely return, he had resigned it, and had not as yet obtained another. And so they lingered on, often fixing a period for their departure, and as often deferring it when the time came.

One morning about the end of June, the post brought them several letters from England, urging their immediate return. Letters from Mrs. Bailey's medical adviser, representing the danger of her remaining any longer in that warm relaxing climate; and letters from Mr. Bailey's brothers, informing him that they had nearly succeeded in getting the promise of a living for him which was vacant in the south of Devonshire, and entreating him to come to London as speedily as possible, in order that the business might be concluded. And as the matter seemed to be decided for them, they could no longer delay, but at once fixed the day of departure for that day week.

Arthur heard the news when he went up to the chateau at his usual hour. He was perfectly overwhelmed by it. With his usual absence and pre-occupation of mind, he had never heard, or at least had never heeded, the many discussions upon the matter, which had passed both at the chateau and at the cottage. He had never thought of their going away at all; and it now came upon him as a sudden and most overwhelming shock. All his despondency and self-

distrust returned at once, he felt again incapable of the least exertion. He made a few vain attempts to go on with his lessons, to understand the explanations which Mr. Bailey was giving him—but it was quite useless. He was obliged to shut his book and to confess that he really could not attend, that he did not know what he was about.

"And, indeed, Sir," he added in a faltering voice, "it will be quite useless for me to try to learn any more. All the pains and trouble you have taken with me have been thrown away. I am such a weak, useless creature, that I never can do anything by myself, I never can help either myself or any one else."

"Certainly not, if you are resolved to be weak and useless all your life, if you are determined never to help yourself and others. But, Arthur, you ought not to give way to these fears and despondency without an effort. It is foolish and unmanly to do so; nay, my boy, it is sinful and ungrateful. Consider how you will disappoint the hopes and expectations of your kind friends if you now abandon all efforts. Remember all that they have done for you. Think"——

"Oh, Sir, do not think that I can ever forget it," interrupted Arthur vehemently. "You must not imagine that I do not hate and despise myself for my weakness. But I cannot help it—I cannot, I cannot."

"Nay, Arthur, you must not say that. Remember the saying of our wise little Margaret, 'I can, because I ought.' If she, one of the weaker sex,

and two years younger than you, has learned to use that word and to feel its strength, why cannot you do so too?"

"Because I am not like Margaret," he said, still more passionately, "because I am not like any other creature."

"In one respect I am inclined to agree with you there," said Mr. Bailey calmly. "You have had no opportunity of comparing yourself with other boys, you are perhaps not conscious of your own great mental superiority. But I, who have seen boys and men of all classes and characters, can tell you, that I have never met with one whose talents were equal to yours, who possessed in his own mind equal capabilities of distinguishing himself, and of advancing the cause of science in the world."

"I know that, Sir," said Arthur, looking and speaking more quietly, but with a more confirmed sadness. "I know that my talents are of no common order. From what I have heard from you, and from what I have read in the lives of distinguished men, I can easily believe that few boys of my age have advanced as far as I have, that I can understand many things which are profound mysteries even to men of mature years and of finished education. But, Sir, you do not know me, you cannot understand my character. You speak of Margaret being of the weaker sex, being younger than I am; I am called a man, it is true; I am advancing to the years of manhood, but I tell you that no

mere girl, no child of four years old, can be more totally destitute than I am of all strength of character, all energy or decision of mind."

Mr. Bailey did not answer immediately. Here was no common weakness or indolence that could be argued against or reasoned away. It was evident that Arthur could never be left to his own unassisted efforts. Mr. Bailey had often during the last two months seriously considered his case, and talked it over with his wife and sister, and they had formed a most benevolent scheme for him, so benevolent that many might have thought it foolish and romantic. He had not as yet communicated his intentions to Norah and Philippe, and considering them the boy's natural guardians, he could not give Arthur the comfort of hearing it until he had their sanction. After a few minutes' silence he merely said in a cheerful, kindly tone—

"Well, Arthur, you say I cannot understand your character. But I can, and do, at least understand and enter into your feelings of regret at the conclusion of our pleasant hours of study. They have been very pleasant to me; you have well rewarded all the trouble I have taken with you; but as I know that you feel great gratitude to me, I will ask you to reward me still farther by now making an effort to give me pleasure."

"Anything I can do," faltered Arthur, his tears falling thick and fast at the mention of those delightful hours of study.

"I will not ask you to endeavour to look cheerfully

and hopefully forward to the future, as you say that is impossible; I will only ask you to endeavour for a few hours at least to keep yourself from giving up all hope; for this day at least try to turn your mind from this painful subject, and perhaps, before another day dawn, some better hope may present itself, some means by which we may yet help you."

"I will do all I can," was the boy's answer, but his voice was firmer, his eye was brighter, a ray of hope had evidently entered his mind, and Mr. Bailey felt encouraged to say more than he had at first intended.

"I will not ask you, Arthur, to trust my wish to serve you; that is a trust which might fail. But you have been too well taught not to know that there is One whose claim to your confidence is as unlimited as His goodness and faithfulness. I ask you to look up to Him, to trust in Him, to believe that He never can forsake the work of His hands; that He has not placed any of His creatures in a situation whose duties they are unable to fulfil."

"But, Sir,—but, Mr. Bailey, how can I know that it is God's will that I should strive after an education above my means and present situation?"

"You know that it is His will that you should use every effort to improve the talents He has given. You know that if He does not see fit to grant your wishes, He will yet certainly grant you resignation to His will; and one who is assured of these facts, ought never to give way to the gloom and despondency you

are inclined to indulge in. He ought to work cheerfully and hopefully at the work of the day and hour, and to leave the event in the hands of his all-wise and tender-loving Father."

"Faith, hope, confidence in God, seem as far from me as every other right and wholesome feeling," he said sadly.

"But they are blessings which God has promised in the fullest, the freest, the most unconditional manner. You can, you ought to have no hesitation here. It is His will that you should believe, hope, confide in Him, and most certainly He will give you strength to do His will, if you ask Him. If you will at this moment look up to Him, to give you strength to do the duty of this moment, most certainly you shall get it."

"And the duty of this moment is?" asked Arthur doubtfully.

"To open the book you so despondingly closed a few minutes ago, and give all your attention to your lesson."

After a moment's pause and hesitation, Arthur followed Mr. Bailey's suggestion. He opened his books, and went steadily on for the next two hours with the usual business of the day. Unconsciously to himself he was strengthened and cheered by this effort, small as it might seem to be.

"Well," said Mr. Bailey kindly, as Arthur prepared to leave him, "there is the duty of two hours well performed. Now, your duty for the next twelve

hours is to wait quietly and patiently until all our plans are decided."

Arthur smiled, and shook his head, but his smile was more cheerful than Mr. Bailey could have hoped; and he left the chateau to go home to dinner, with far less despondency of heart than he had felt two hours before.

The news he had to tell was not so surprising to any of his home circle as it had been to him. They had long expected it, but still it was sad enough. Norah had long before this agreed with her husband that she should have a confidential conversation with Mr. Bailey before he went away, and should ask his advice about their future plans. There was now no time to be lost. As soon as the young people had set off upon a long walk, she went up to the chateau, and was ushered into Mr. Bailey's study, just as he was laying aside his papers with the intention of seeking an interview with her at her own house.

Norah's first object was to ascertain from Mr. Bailey the sum that would be necessary for Arthur's college education. She gave a quiet sigh when he named what he considered the very lowest; it was so much more than she had calculated, so much above what they could hope to realize for a long time to come. She then went on in her own simple, concise manner, to state all her plans and purposes, all her hopes and fears, and to ask his advice.

Mr. Bailey fully confirmed her doubts that Arthur

might never be able to make his way in the world alone, that he could never be left to his own unaided exertions, and fully agreed with her that it would be unwise, dangerous, and even cruel, to expose such a boy to the temptations and trials of college life.

Another gentle, subdued sigh escaped from Norah, as she asked Mr. Bailey what he would advise them to do in this difficult case.

It was now his turn to explain his plans. His desire to be of use to Arthur had, he said, been at first chiefly awakened by his interest in herself, her husband, and Margaret, and by his admiration of their generous efforts and self-denial. But it was not long before the boy's own character won for him a warm place in his heart, and he now regarded him with more affection than he felt for any individual out of his own family circle. He had considered the subject of his future prospects with as much anxiety and earnestness as he could have felt in the case of his own sons; and after much thought and discussion, after much earnest prayer for guidance and instruction as to their duty, he and Mrs. Bailey had taken the resolution of offering to receive Arthur as an inmate of their own family, to take upon themselves the whole burden of his education, and, in short, to provide for and maintain him until he should be able to maintain himself.

Norah was almost speechless with surprise and gratitude. She could only stammer out—"But, Mr. Bailey—but, Sir, with a family of your own to provide for."

He hastened to relieve her mind by a full statement of his circumstances. He had a small independent fortune, and so had Mrs. Bailey. Their income was not very large, but quite sufficient for all their wishes, and quite sufficient to acquit him to his own conscience of all imprudence in what he proposed. Besides, he said, the benefit was not all on Arthur's side. He expected that he too should profit by the arrangement. If his brothers' wishes were realized, he should have so much occupation in his new parish, that he should be unable to attend properly to the education of his boys, and must either send them to school, or engage a private tutor. Both plans were disagreeable to him, and Arthur could save him from the adoption of either. He was quite competent to carry on the greater part of their education under Mr. Bailey's direction and superintendence, and he could pursue his own studies in the meantime with such assistance as Mr. Bailey could afford.

"Although," he added smiling, "I must find time for study too if I am to be Arthur's instructor for any length of time. He will soon leave me behind. Should his mind gain greatly in strength and decision in the course of the next year or two, I may perhaps venture to send him to college; if otherwise, I must devise some other and safer means of procuring for him what instruction he requires. And should it come to the worst, should he never be able to render himself independent, I can engage to settle upon him such a sum as may.

in the event of my death, yield him the means of subsistence, as may enable him to pursue his favourite studies in comfort. It will not be a large sum, but I think I can answer for its being sufficient to satisfy both his and your moderate wishes."

Satisfy! Norah could not find words to express the deep joy and thankfulness of her heart; the perfect relief from all her fears and anxieties afforded by the prospect of such a comfortable home for her boy, such tender, wise friends to protect and take care of him.

She wished Mr. Bailey to take the sum of money which they had saved, and lay it out for Arthur's use. He might, either now or at some future time, require expensive books, or mathematical instruments, she said, and Mr. Bailey might at least be saved that expense; but Mr. Bailey would not consent. He considered Arthur henceforward as a son of his own, and should provide for him all he required, as for Frederick or James. This money must be kept for Margaret's use. And then followed a long discussion upon the possible means of giving her an education equal to the station to which she naturally belonged, and to which they hoped her brother might hereafter be able to raise her.

Norah gave Mr. Bailey the information she possessed about Mr. Cecil's relations, and he engaged to make inquiries concerning Sir William Cecil as soon as he reached London; and if he were still alive to find some means of influencing him in favour of his nephew's orphan children. In the meantime, they agreed that

Margaret should go on as well as she could by herself; that Mr. Bailey should send her a supply of proper books from Paris; that Norah's little store of money should be allowed to accumulate for a year or two; and then, if Sir William would or could do nothing for her, they should make use of it to pay for her education at a boarding-school. It was clear to both, that honest Philippe's plan, that she should be brought up as his child, was no longer admissible. She might be contented in such a situation, for her temper would enable her to be happy in any case, but of course she must wish to be with her brother, and they must therefore seek to fit her for that rank.

Poor Margaret! Much as she had wished for Arthur's being able to go to college, and sincerely as she rejoiced in his good fortune, it was a terrible trial to part with him, and with her dear, dear Miss Bailey, and her merry companions, Frederick and James, at the same time. The bustle of preparation was of great service to her in diverting her thoughts from these subjects. But at night when she was left alone in her little bedroom, bitter and long were her fits of weeping, and many a severe struggle she had, in reconciling her heart to this great sorrow.

But I do not mean to dwell on the parting. This chapter is already too long, so I must beg my young friends to picture the sad scene for themselves, to suppose the whole party gone, and so to turn to the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

MARGARET ALONE.

No, Margaret was not alone. I ought not to have said that she was. She would not have said so herself; she was not one to make the worst of any matter, to exaggerate her sorrows even to herself.

No, she was not alone. She had still the tender, the true-hearted Norah to share in all her feelings, in all her joys and sorrows; to whom she could confide every thought of her heart, and from whom she could expect, with perfect confidence, the fullest sympathy and the most judicious counsel.

She had still the kindly Philippe to take a fatherly interest in all her concerns, to provide with a father's care for her welfare and comfort, and to repay with pleasant words and looks every little service she rendered to him.

She had still the gay, good-humoured Pierre, to accompany her in her pleasant rambles through the woods, now so beautiful in all the richness of their summer foliage; to read to her as she sat at work in the garden in the cool of the evening; to help her to tend her favourite flowers and bees, and to devise and execute for

her new contrivances for the comfortable accommodation of her pets—her kid, her rabbits, and her turtle-doves.

It is true that Margaret had advanced far beyond Pierre in her education during the last few months, at least as far as book learning was concerned; but she did not like him the less on that account, nor was he in truth on that account a less pleasant companion. He had inherited from his mother all her good sense and activity of mind, and she had taught him her own habits of quick intelligent observation of all things around him. Margaret might know more of books than he did, but it would have been difficult to have found any one who knew more of nature, who could give better or more interesting information about all natural objects, animate and inanimate, beasts, birds, and fishes, rocks, trees, and flowers. And his naturally pleasant, kindly temper had been so improved under Norah's skilful tuition; his heedlessness, his slight tendency to self-importance had been so carefully checked, that no one could help liking him; every one felt happier and more cheerful in his presence; and young as he was, every one felt that they could entirely trust to his kindliness of heart, to his generosity, and freedom from all petty selfishness or liability to take offence. Such a boy must always be a pleasant companion, a safe friend.

No, Margaret was not left alone. And had you asked her the question, she would have been ready most thankfully to acknowledge that she was not. But with her thankfulness for the blessings still left to

her, there were mingled a slight feeling of langour and listlessness, a slight disinclination for all her old occupations and pursuits.

For so many years, ever since she was quite a child, one of the principal occupations of her life had been, in her own language, to take care of Arthur; and for the last two years in particular, her time had been fully occupied either with him or for him. Now working busily for his benefit; now watching his various moods of thought and feeling; devising plans to amuse and cheer him when he was dull, and endeavouring to understand and share in his pursuits. And now that he was gone, all interest in any occupation, all desire to work in any way, seemed gone also.

Norah's watchful eyes soon perceived this, but she did not at first interfere. It seemed so natural that Margaret should feel unsettled and listless immediately after this great change, that she did not feel inclined to blame her, but preferred to wait patiently until time, and Margaret's own healthful cheerful spirit, had wrought a natural cure. But as time passed on, and Margaret became more idle and listless, instead of less so, then she began to fear that lazy, indolent habits might be confirmed, and she determined to speak to her.

"Had you given yourself a longer task than usual to-day, dear?" she asked one forenoon, when Margaret had been sitting for a long time over one of her lessons.

Margaret started.

"No!" she said. "Why do you ask?"

"Only because you have taken longer than usual to learn it?"

"Have I? Well, I suppose I have. No, it is not at all a long task; but the truth is, I have been learning it rather lazily and inattentively. There is no necessity for my getting quickly through my work now."

"What do you mean by no necessity?"

"Only that there is nothing I very much care to do after my lesson is finished."

"Nor anything you ought to do?"

"Nor anything I ought to do."

"Nay, my child, you must be mistaken there. So long as there is sorrow and suffering in the world, none can say that they have nothing to do. If you have no work to do for yourself, God has given you leisure in order that you may employ it for the good of others."

"Well, but what should you advise me to do, Norah, after I have learned this lesson?"

"I do not yet know exactly. Perhaps I may advise you to go into the garden to look at your flowers; perhaps, as the day is so beautiful, to go up to the mill. The view must be surpassingly lovely on a day like this."

"Oh, but these are mere idle amusements," she said laughing.

"Amusements if you like, but not idle ones. You will gain health and strength of body by exercise, and

health and strength of mind by the sight and enjoyment of the beautiful works of God."

"Well, I daresay I should like the walk to the mill, but I must finish my lessons first," and she took up the book with something between a sigh and yawn.

"I never heard you sigh so often as you do now. I never saw you look so weary in those days when you used to be so busy, and to labour so industriously," remarked Norah.

"No, I daresay not. This slow, lazy way of getting through work is wearisome enough. But then, Norah, how can I care to be very industrious, when all the object, all the occupation of my life is gone?"

"My dear child, you do not think of what you are saying. None can ever say that they have no object, no occupation."

"What are mine, then, Norah?" she persisted.

"To serve your God, to do His will, to seek His glory," was the solemn answer.

Margaret blushed deeply.

"But that is so general," she said, after a pause; "one wishes for something more particular."

"And have you no particular occupation?"

"Not that I can see."

"Have you tried to see it, dear? You can never find out what your duty is by sitting idly in your chair, sighing and yawning, and complaining that you have no object in life. You must look earnestly around you, on every one with whom you are in any way connect-

ed. You must consider seriously their wants, and your own power to relieve them, and that will at once show your duty. The God who placed you near them, who gave them these wants, and you that power, clearly points out to you what He wishes you to do."

Margaret was silent for some minutes; and then looking up with her own ingenuous blush and smile, she said—

"Well, Norah, instead of going up to the mill this afternoon, I shall go across the fields to blind Marie's, and read to her for an hour or two. She has got no eyes, and I have got two good ones, so that will be a good instance of want and supply, will it not?"

"Very good, my child. But before you take up your book again, I wish to remind you that there is another way of looking at this matter. You acknowledge that you have a well-marked-out occupation for this hour at least, namely, to learn that lesson; only you excuse the lazy, listless way you set about it, upon the plea that you do not know what ought to be the occupation of the next hour. Now, dear, do you not see that this hour is as much a gift from God as any future hour can be; that the work of this hour is as much His work as the work of any hour to come? And can you think it right to do His work negligently or carelessly? Were all the rest of your life to be a blank, were you never called upon to do *one* other duty, yet is it not right that you should do the present one with *all* your might, because it is the Lord's work.

because it is to the Lord you do it? Do you not agree with me?"

"Yes, Norah, I think I do, but I never thought of this before."

"No, dear, I daresay not. We are all apt to forget it. We all like to look forward to what we suppose may happen in a year or two, and we like to prepare ourselves for trials and duties which we fancy may present themselves hereafter, while we take very little heed as to how we are bearing present trials, or performing present duties. We are all inclined to overlook our common work which lies before us, while thinking of greater things which we fancy we can see in the distance."

"Just as I have been idle and careless all forenoon, while I have been planning how industriously I shall labour, when I shall be again left to take care of Arthur."

"Exactly. We read in our Bibles—'It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure,' and we picture to ourselves some great season of trial and difficulty, and think how encouraging, how solemnizing it will be then, to know that the great God is working in and with us. And at the same time we dare to be negligent and trifling with the little duties of the da , as if God's help were not as necessary for the right discharge of them, as of the greater ones."

"So that I need God's help to learn this lesson aright?" said Margaret half questioningly.

"To enable you to be diligent in it from a right motive, dear, to enable you to do it because He wills it. I daresay you can learn it perfectly in your own strength, and learn it diligently for your own sake."

"It is a very solemn thought that God is working in us in every duty we perform," said Margaret seriously.

"Too solemn, do you think, dear?"

Margaret did not answer immediately, and Norah looked at her a little anxiously, and seemed much pleased when she said at last, in a grave, thoughtful tone—

"No, I do not think so. It is a helping thought."

"Yes, it certainly is. Whatever solemnizes us, whatever makes us in earnest, also strengthens us. But, dear, we must not talk on and make you lose this beautiful day; besides, we have said enough for the present. We have found enough to think about, strong enough reasons for earnest, diligent working, very sufficient subjects for thought, and excitements to action."

Margaret took up her book, and for some time occupied herself very diligently with her lesson. When she had finished it, she put away the book, and went to get her bonnet.

"And are you going to blind Marie's, then, dear?" asked Norah, as Margaret stood looking out of the window in an absent, thoughtful manner.

"Yes, Norah. But I was thinking that there is one argument on your side which you forgot to use. If I teach myself idle, lazy habits now, I shall not be

able to exert myself for Arthur as I could wish hereafter."

"True; but that is a style of argument I do not much wish you to meddle with just now."

"Why, Norah? Is it not a good one?" she asked in some surprise.

"Good in some cases, but not very good in yours. As I said before, what I want you to feel just now is, that during every moment of your life you have something to do for God, and that present duty ought to be as important to you as any future one can be. You ought to be diligent now, because it is God's will that you should be so, and not merely because you fancy that present diligence may help you in future duties. And," she added after a pause, "there is still another reason why I should not have used that argument."

"And what was that? Tell me, dear Norah, and then I will go at once?"

"You remember your mother's last conversation with you, dear, and the warning she gave you, that you might some time find yourself forced to labour hard and to deny yourself for the sake of those for whom you could feel no affection?"

"Oh yes, Norah, I remember all she said," was Margaret's answer, in that tone of deep feeling with which she always spoke of her mother.

"Well, dear, during the past two years you have had no opportunity of learning this difficult duty. All your work has been for our dear Arthur, and love

to him has been sufficient motive for every exertion. But now he is away, and you are no longer called upon to labour for him, and I cannot help thinking that one blessing which God means to give you by thus changing our plans, is to teach you this very habit of which your mother spoke, to do every duty because it *is* duty, and not merely from love to those towards whom you do it. But you refuse to learn this habit, if you endeavour to find the motive for present industry in the increased power it may give you to help Arthur, if you should hereafter be placed in circumstances to be of use to him."

"*If!* oh, Norah, do not say *if*. I could not bear to be of no farther use to Arthur."

"You can bear whatever God sends, my own Margaret. He who sends trial, will also send the strength to bear it," said Norah, tenderly and soothingly. "We do not, we cannot, know anything about what is before us; all we have to do with is our present duty, our present trial."

"And my present trial is to be uncertain as to how Arthur and I may be situated a few years hence," said Margaret, still sadly.

"Yes. And your present duty is to trust all in your loving Father's hands; and this is the duty He will certainly give you strength for."

Margaret did not say anything more. She kissed Norah affectionately, as an answer to her kind look of solicitude, and then set off upon her walk.

The first part was grave enough. She was meditating upon all that had passed. But about half way she met Pierre, and he had such interesting news to tell her of a new plant he had found, and such pleasant plans to lay of taking her that afternoon to see the beautiful spot in the distant wood where he had found it, that all her gravity disappeared, and she was again the gay, animated Margaret, whose visits were such a comfort and refreshment to the sick among her poor neighbours.

She found the old friend she came to see unusually dull and depressed, for Marie, though living quite alone, totally blind, very infirm, poor, and helpless, was in general remarkably cheerful, had always a smiling welcome to give to any one who came to see her. But she had been very unwell, quite confined to bed for some days, and she had heard bad accounts of her only son, who was a servant in a family in England. She had received no direct intelligence from himself, but a young woman from the valley, who was also a servant in an English family, had, in writing to her parents, mentioned having seen him, thinking him very ill, and having heard since that he had been obliged to give up his situation; and poor Marie, in her darkness and solitude, had been dwelling upon such dreary images of her boy ill, perhaps dying, among strangers, without any means of support; and she had been longing for a visit from some of her kind friends to cheer and comfort her, and to advise her as to the

best means of gaining the intelligence she wished for as to her son.

Margaret's heart reproached her for neglecting this poor solitary creature when she found how much she had wanted her presence. She immediately set about making her as comfortable as she could. She brought cold sparkling water from the spring to wash her face and hands, tenderly brushed out her long, tangled gray hair, and put it smoothly and comfortably away under her clean night-cap. She warmed the soup Norah had sent with her, toasted a slice of bread, and supported her old friend in bed while she ate it. And then she was ready to sit down and listen attentively and sympathizingly to the story of her sorrows, and to read a chapter or two out of the Bible, the good old woman's unfailing resource in time of trouble. When she saw her look more cheerful, she proposed to go home and write the letters for her to her son, to his old master, and to their own friend Mr. Bailey, who expected to be in London pretty frequently during the autumn, and who, Margaret was sure, would be glad to make all inquiries about poor Bertrand.

But no time should be lost in getting them written. The miller's married daughter, Madame Grève, who had been paying her parents a visit, was to set out on her return to her husband at Bordeaux that evening, or the next morning, and could take them with her. So Marie was forced to part with her young friend.

Margaret had not gone many steps from the cottage when she again met Pierre. He had remarked her expression of seriousness, almost of melancholy, when he met her before, and attributing it to sorrow for Arthur's absence, he had kindly set about devising some plan for her amusement. He had gone home and arranged with his mother, that they should take advantage of the lovely day for the long walk, to see the new beauties which he had discovered, and as Marie's cottage lay quite in the way, he had come back to meet Margaret, bringing his own and her dinner with him, in order that they might stay in the woods as long as they pleased.

Margaret's eyes danced with joy at the prospect for a moment, until she remembered her promise to Marie, and then she said sorrowfully that they could not go to-day, she must go straight home to write the letters. Pierre tried to persuade her that they might be written in the evening, after they came home. But Margaret was firm. She reminded him that Madame Grève might very possibly set out that evening, and convinced him, though against his will, that the letters must be written as soon as possible. He looked much vexed, and she, anxious to please him, suggested that perhaps when they got home they might find that Norah could write instead of her, and so they might still have their walk.

"My mother!" he cried, starting, "oh, to be sure; that will do exactly. Go you back to Marie, and

stay there quietly till I return. I will run home and ask my mother if she can write the letters, and I am quite sure she will, for she wishes you to get this walk, and then I will come for you, and we can set out. You must not go home yourself. You could not go so far as I mean you to go, if you were to walk all the way there and back again in addition. So go back to Marie, and sit still, that you may be quite fresh by the time I come for you. Goodbye, goodbye," and he would hardly stay to hear the message he was to take about the letters.

Marie was delighted to hear her favourite's step again enter her cottage, and to know that she was going to stay a little longer beside her; but when she understood the whole business, she was anxious to make Margaret promise that she should go with Pierre, in any case, and leave the letters to be written in the evening. This Margaret positively refused to do, gaily asking her if she thought this was the only day in the year that she and Pierre could spend in the woods, and then proposed to sing to her, in order to end the discussion.

Marie was very fond of music, and particularly enjoyed Margaret's singing. Her voice was so sweet, and she sang so many of the wild, old-fashioned airs which Marie had loved in her younger days. For some time she listened with great delight, as Margaret sang one after another of her favourite hymns, until wearied with the pleasure of her visit, and having passed several

sleepless nights, the low sweet music gradually lulled her to sleep.

Margaret was now left to pursue her own thoughts; and I think it was well for her that it was so. She recalled all the particulars of her talk with Norah, and as she reflected on the good she had so easily been able to do this poor woman, and contrasted the peaceful, happy expression of her face as she lay sleeping before her, with the anxious, sorrowful look it had worn when she first came in, her heart smote her for the idle useless way in which she had lately wasted her time, when it might have been so well employed, either for Marie, or for others who as much required her help.

"Norah was right," she thought; "we have all got something to do, if we will only set earnestly about finding it out. I have been very wrong, very selfish to indulge so long in that lazy indolence, merely because I had not Arthur to work for."

Marie was awakened by Pierre bursting joyfully into the cottage, with the intelligence that his mother was to come over to Marie as soon as she had given his father his dinner, that she meant to write the letters by her bedside, and to stay with her all the afternoon.

"And so, dear," said the old woman kindly, "you will get your walk. I am very glad, and I hope you will enjoy it as much as you deserve."

Margaret had no doubt that they should. And they did; and enjoyed it all the more from the knowledge

that their poor old friend was quite happy in the society of the good, kind Norah.

Now I have no intention of dwelling thus particularly upon all the events of this autumn. I have given you the full details of this day, only because they made a deep impression upon Margaret's mind, and because she had this day learned a lesson which she often found useful in her after-life. To do with *all* diligence whatever her hand found to do, even in cases where she did not see that there was any very pressing duty to succeed the present one.

The cool pleasant autumn days passed quietly away. Margaret was constantly occupied, cheerful and happy. By Norah's advice, she devoted the whole forenoon to the studies her friends had recommended to her. She was Norah's ready and willing assistant in her acts of charity and kindness to her poor neighbours, and gave her as much help in her household labours, and in her needlework, as Norah would accept.

They received several letters from Arthur, written in excellent spirits. He had not much liked the bustle of the journey, nor of their residence in London; but their stay there had been very short. They had soon gone down to the pretty retired parsonage belonging to Mr. Bailey's new living in Devonshire. Everybody was very kind to him, he said, and he was very happy, luxuriating in the abundant supply of books of every kind, and in the opportunity he enjoyed of quiet study. Mr. or Mrs. Bailey generally added a kind postscript

to these letters to express their perfect satisfaction with their adopted son, as they called him, and to give their opinion of his health. And there were often a few lines from Frederick or James, to tell Margaret of the beauties and charms of their new home, and to assure her that they had not forgotten their promise to amuse and cheer Arthur, and to tempt him to go out with them regularly every day.

These letters were a great source of interest and pleasure to the whole family, and above all to Margaret. It made her heart so light and happy, she said, to think of dear Arthur being so safe, and with such good, kind friends, instead of being away among strangers, as she had always fancied he must be when he went to college.

About the beginning of winter, a letter arrived from Mr. Bailey to Norah and Philippe. Soon after his arrival in England, he had informed them in one of his postscripts that Sir William Cecil was still alive, and that he was using every exertion to find out some one who was intimate with him, and who would undertake to plead the cause of the orphans. If he did not succeed in this, he should then address Sir William directly, either by letter, or by seeking a personal interview; but he did not wish to adopt this measure hastily, which he looked upon as a last resource. For, totally unacquainted as he was with that gentleman's character, with his peculiar ways of thinking and feeling, there was a risk that he might inadvertently injure the

cause he wished to serve, that he might adopt the very line of argument least calculated to influence him favourably.

The purport of this present letter was to announce that he had quite accidentally discovered, that an intimate friend of his was a near connexion of Lady Cecil's, and a great favourite with Sir William. He had related to him the whole history of the young Cecils, their present circumstances and wants, and had readily obtained from him a promise to exert all his influence on their behalf.

Mr. Bailey said that his friend held out to him good hopes of success. Sir William, he said, was not the hard-hearted man Mr. Bailey supposed him to be, judging from his determined silence in answer to his nephew's last and urgent appeal. His family pride too was very great, and must interfere to prevent him from leaving his own near relatives dependent upon the charity of strangers.

In these circumstances, with this probability that they might soon be called upon to part with Margaret, Mr. Bailey had thought it advisable to write at once to prepare them for what might be before them, instead of waiting, as he had once intended, for more positive information.

Now that the time seemed really near at hand when she was to leave the valley where all her short life had been passed, Margaret began for the first time to realize how painful the parting must be. In all their visions

for the future, she and Arthur had constantly pictured themselves living either in England or Ireland. They had always supposed that Arthur would go either to an English or Irish college, and their favourite imagination had been that he should hereafter be professor in such a college, and Margaret live with him to keep his house. But they had never taken into account all that might be implied in such a scheme. While dwelling upon the pleasure of being Arthur's companion and housekeeper, attending to his comfort and happiness, and glorying in his fame, she had never thought of the pain it must give her to lose sight for ever of all the old familiar scenes and faces with which she had been acquainted since her birth. She had never realized what it must be, never again to see that old chateau, every corner of which was associated with thoughts and memories of her own dear mother; never again to wander through that garden where she and Arthur had played as children; never again to admire those beautiful rich woods and those bright sunny fields, where so many happy days had been passed; and far above all the rest, never again to enjoy the sweet daily intercourse with her second mother, to lose for ever her constant watchful care, her tender sympathy, her advice and assistance; to be no longer able to go to her in every joy and sorrow; to be no longer able by little loving services and attentions, to prove how dearly she loved her, and how grateful she felt for all her kindness.

As all these thoughts and remembrances crowded for

the first time into her mind, she felt that the trial was more than she could bear; and she was for a while inclined to give up all her long-formed plans and schemes, anxious to persuade Norah and herself that it was her duty to remain where she was, that she might act a daughter's part to the good parents who had so tenderly acted a father and a mother's part to her.

But Norah was firm upon this point. She and Philippe had decided long ago what would be the duty of each and all in the event of its ever becoming possible to give Margaret the advantages which they wished for her, and that decision was not now to be changed by Margaret's entreaties and arguments. She entered fully into all her feelings of regret, she showed the tenderest compassion for her, and frankly and freely expressed the regret she felt at the thought of parting from her; but she continued firmly and earnestly to assert that Margaret ought to go and must go, and set herself affectionately and perseveringly to console her and to reconcile her to what was inevitable. The most convincing as well as consolatory argument that could be used, was the hope of soon again seeing Arthur. And when poor Margaret had got over her first burst of sorrow at the thought of leaving Norah, she began to look forward to this bright spot in the prospect, and to confess that such a happiness could make her amends for much and bitter grief. The parting, however, was not so close at hand as they feared. Mr. Bailey's friend found Sir William willing to do *something* for his

nephew's children, but not willing to acknowledge them as such near relatives until he had quite ascertained that they were not likely to prove a discredit to him. He doubted and hesitated, planned and re-planned fifty times before he could resolve what he was to do. Even after he had decided that the first step must be to send Margaret to school, and had actually fixed upon one to which to send her, much time was consumed in deliberations about the light in which she was to be regarded by her governess and companions;—whether as an honoured member of the noble family of Cecil, or as a humble dependant whose education was to be procured at as small an expense as possible, and to be partly paid for by her own exertions in instructing the younger pupils. He finally compromised this matter. The Misses Beville received for their new pupil the full amount of board paid by any member of their establishment; but a profound silence was preserved on the subject of her connexions, and it was intimated that her studies were to be regulated with a view to her becoming qualified for the office of governess.

While these negotiations were going on, the Chantals heard frequently from Mr. Bailey. No letter contained any positive information, but each one brought fuller assurance that the time was quickly and surely approaching when Margaret must leave her present home and go forth among strangers. Every such assurance increased the sad and clinging affection she felt for those she was so soon to leave; but, at the same time, gradually pre-

pared her for the separation, and rendered it less bitter when it came.

About midsummer a cold, formal letter was received from Sir William, directing that Margaret should go to Bordeaux without loss of time, to apply to a gentleman in that city, whose address was given, and from whom she should receive directions for her farther progress. The letter concluded by saying, that as Sir Charles O'Brien refused to assist in the support and education of his nephew and niece, any farther than by continuing the paltry pittance he already allowed to them, Sir William disdained to receive anything from him, and requested Monsieur and Madame Chantal to continue to receive the said paltry pittance, and to appropriate it, along with the sum already accumulated, to their own use, as a remuneration for the trouble and expense they had already incurred on behalf of the orphans.

This clause was in a great measure Margaret's doing. As soon as it seemed pretty certain that Sir William would take upon himself the burden of her education, she had written to Arthur to suggest that Norah's and Philippe's claims to some remuneration ought to be urged upon his attention, and Mr. Bailey had, at Arthur's request, written to him upon the subject. This letter arrived at a fortunate time, when all Sir William's family pride had been aroused by some very contemptuous expressions respecting Mr. Cecil, by which Sir Charles O'Brien excused himself from taking any farther charge of his children, and he gladly

availed himself of the opportunity to retaliate, and in his turn to speak contemptuously of Sir Charles.

When Sir William's letter was first read, the attention of the whole family was absorbed in the prospect of so soon losing their dear Margaret, and in the consideration of the best mode for her and Norah's travelling to Bordeaux, that it was not until Philippe had gone to consult his friend the miller upon this important subject, that Norah adverted to the latter part of it. She wished to decline the proposition altogether, and was sure that Philippe would feel as she did. If Sir William would not receive the money, it ought to be given to Margaret and Arthur for their disposal. Judging from the cold, formal style of the letter, she did not expect that the former would experience much kindness or consideration from her new guardians, and she might often be placed in awkward and uncomfortable situations for want of a little ready money.

But Margaret entreated her with so much earnestness and affection to accept of it, and seemed so much distressed by her refusal, that she was at last forced to yield.

"Keep it, dear Norah," she urged, "and if you have no other use for it, it may some day enable you and dear Philippe and Pierre to come to England to see us, and to visit your own Ireland once again."

"My own Ireland!" repeated Norah, while her whole face lighted up with joy at the thought of seeing it once more.

Margaret looked at her earnestly and sadly.

"Ah, Norah!" she said, "how Irish your heart is. It makes me melancholy to think that all your life must be passed so far far away from where you could wish to be."

"But it ought not to make you melancholy, dear," said Norah, with quiet cheerfulness of look and tone; "God has placed me here, and God has given, and will continue to give, a heart perfectly at rest and satisfied with what He orders.

"But about our going to see you, darling, it is more probable that Arthur and you may some time be able to come to see us. And in that case, remember the money is ready to pay the expense of the journey."

"And we will ask it from you, dear Norah, as freely as if you really were the father and mother, whose part you have always acted towards us. But," she continued, interrupting herself, "there is Father Philippe back already. How slowly he walks, how sad he looks!"

The sadness of Philippe's look was soon explained. The miller was willing to lend his light cart and horse to convey Norah and Margaret to a town about fifteen miles off, where they could get a diligence to take them to Bordeaux, but it must be on the morrow.

"To-morrow!" repeated both at once, "and no other day?"

No other day that would suit the diligence, Philippe said. The miller knew all about it, because his daugh-

ter lived at Bordeaux, and there was often some member of the family going backwards and forwards.

Margaret threw herself with a passionate burst of tears into Philippe's arms.

"And I have seen you come home from work for the last time," she sobbed, "and I did not know it; I have taken my last walk with Pierre, and I did not know it; I have paid my last visit to dear old Marie, and I did not know it. Oh, how much I should have done, if I had but known it! Oh, mother, mother, my heart will break!"

Their own tears were falling too fast for either to attempt to comfort her. Philippe could only press her more closely to his breast, and murmur tenderly—"Bless thee, my child, bless thee!"

Her grief thus unrestrained soon exhausted itself. Her sobs ceased, she endeavoured to check her tears, and raising herself she said, trying to smile—

"I am very selfish to grieve you in this way; and I know you too are sorry to lose your Margaret. I will not cry any more."

"You will have much to do to get ready in time, darling. You and Norah will have little time to grieve."

"Oh!" she cried suddenly, "there is the case I was making to hold Marie's knitting-needles, I must have time to finish it. She was so glad when I told her of it, and said she should like it so much. I will run and fetch it, and I can work on while you tell us what we are to do."

"It is all for the best, though you don't think so now," remarked Philippe, as he followed her with his eyes when she ran out of the room. "All this bustle and shortening of leave-takings is best for you both, Norah."

And it certainly seemed that Philippe was right, when Margaret returned with cheerful looks to show how nearly her case was finished, to say how glad she should be if she could really get it done, and to express her pleasure at hearing that both Philippe and Pierre were to accompany them part of the way.

The first arrangement had been that they should go only as far as the town where they were to meet the diligence, but late in the evening the miller sent a message to Philippe, to say that one of his men was to be at that town the following day, and could take charge of the cart home if Philippe liked; an offer which was at once accepted. Philippe knew how much his wife must suffer at the final parting, and was glad to be able to be with her at such a time. And as for expense, he said, it was only drawing upon Norah's purse for travelling expenses a little sooner than they had intended.

By this means the journey was not nearly so melancholy as they had anticipated. Neither Margaret nor Pierre had ever been out of their native valley before, and the novelty of every object they saw naturally distracted their thoughts from the subject of their grief, and made them cheerful, and even gay.

The gentleman to whom they had been directed to apply, was a wine-merchant, a correspondent of Sir William's banker. He was a very kind, pleasant man, and seemed anxious to arrange everything as comfortably as possible for the young lady. The manner of her farther progress had been left entirely to his discretion. A vessel was to sail the following morning direct for London, and as that seemed both to him and Norah the safest and most respectable mode of conveyance for a girl travelling quite alone, a passage was at once engaged for her in it. The vessel was to sail so early, that the passengers had to go on board the night before.

The intervening hours were fully occupied in purchasing such articles of dress as Norah thought indispensable for a young lady making her *début* at a fashionable boarding-school. And then the sad hour of parting came.

Poor Norah's heart failed her at the last. She could not bear the thought of her cherished Margaret being left to undertake a long voyage quite alone, and she was strongly tempted to accompany her, and see her safely to her final destination. Her feelings were sorely divided between unwillingness to leave her husband and boy, and anxiety for the comfort and safety of her young charge. This anxiety was in a great measure relieved by the wine-merchant finding out that an English family, with whom he was slightly acquainted, were to be her fellow-passengers, and by

their kind assurance, upon being introduced, that they would do all they could for her comfort. They were on board an hour or two before Margaret came, and the mother of the family, an elderly, and remarkably benevolent-looking lady, received the sobbing girl from the arms of poor Norah, and soothed and comforted her with as much tenderness as if she had been a child of her own. During the whole voyage, they showed the same kindness towards her, and under its cheering influence, and in the prospect of soon seeing Arthur, her spirits gradually recovered their usual tone.

PART II.
MARGARET IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

NEW SCENES.

Margaret lost the comfort and protection of this kind family before she reached her destination. They landed at Southampton. There were no other passengers, as it was a merchant vessel, so that Margaret was left alone with the captain and crew.

She was not so much concerned at this as another girl might have been. She now knew the captain quite well, and he was very kind and attentive to her. Her late companions had assured her that she could find no difficulty upon arriving in London; that her friends, who must know by what vessel she was to sail, would take care to be instantly informed of its arrival, and that all she had to do was to remain quietly on board until some one came for her.

This might have been the case had there been any parent or near relation expecting her, whose tender love would make them scrupulously careful about every

arrangement. But with poor Margaret it was very different. Sir William had engaged the Misses Beville to receive her as a pupil, had written to his banker's correspondent to send her away, and had too little interest in the whole business to make any calculations as to the time of her arrival, or the mode of her reception. The Bordeaux merchant had written to mention by what vessel the young lady had sailed. Sir William had forwarded the letter to the Misses Beville, and left all the necessary arrangements to them. But it was the midsummer vacation, the Misses Beville were travelling in Scotland, and their housekeeper had to keep the letter for several days before she knew how to address it to them. No one had thought of writing to the Baileys, and the first news they heard of her having left France was a letter from herself, written on board ship, and posted at Southampton.

All these circumstances concurred to make poor Margaret's first entrance into London a very awkward one. The vessel arrived at London Bridge early in the day. Pursuant to the directions she had received, Margaret waited for some time as patiently as she could for the arrival of the expected messenger. But as hour passed after hour, until the whole afternoon was gone, and still no one came, she grew seriously uneasy. Her uneasiness was greatly increased when she went on deck to ask the Captain's advice, by her finding that he had gone on shore, and the mate did not know when he might return. She was confused and bewildered by

the noise and bustle around her, by the crowd of vessels passing up and down the river, and by the concourse of passengers and vehicles of all descriptions which she saw on shore. It seemed to her impossible to think of anything in such a bustle, and she felt overwhelmed at the thought of being left quite alone among such crowds of strangers.

The mate had evidently quite forgotten the fact of her being still on board, and was as much puzzled as herself, to determine what was to be done with her.

"I know where I am going to," said Margaret, a little timidly, "and perhaps I might ask some one to show me the way. Only everybody seems so busy, I am afraid no one could have time to think of me, or to answer me."

The mate laughed a little at her simplicity, but said. that if she knew the exact address of the friends to whom she was going, he could easily get her conveyed there in safety. He should have gone with her himself, he added, but he could not leave the vessel until the captain returned.

It was now seven o'clock, and as Margaret said that her destination was at Hampstead, no time was to be lost. So he sent a sailor to fetch the most respectable looking cab he could find, put Margaret and her luggage into it, gave the man orders where to drive to, accompanied with many injunctions to be civil to the young lady, and so bade her a kind farewell.

Margaret felt as if she had in him lost her last friend

As her cab slowly threaded its way through the narrow and crowded thoroughfare, as she looked out on the multitude of strange faces on every side, and reflected on the unkindness and negligence manifested by those to whose care she had been committed, in suffering her thus to make her own way in a strange place, unaided and alone, her heart sank within her, and she could have cried from mere weariedness and vexation of spirit.

But she was by no means a crying girl, she had sense to know the present was no time to indulge any despondency or weakness, and the feeling that she had no one but herself to depend upon, nerved and strengthened her. She resolutely drove back the tears which had started to her eyes, seated herself in the farthest corner of the carriage, that she might not see the opposing streams of heavy waggons and immense omnibuses, which, to her inexperienced eyes, threatened instant destruction to her lighter vehicle; and she set herself steadfastly to forget all present troubles, and to prepare herself to meet cheerfully any annoyance that might still be in store for her.

But her meditations, cheerful or otherwise, were very short. She soon fell fast asleep. Poor girl, she was completely worn out. She had slept little the previous night, her mind having been too busy with her anticipations of her first interview with her future governess, and of her first meeting with Arthur, after a twelvemonth's separation. She had risen very early in the

morning, and had been kept in a state of bustle and anxiety ever since.

When she awoke startled and confused, she found that she was still driving along streets, though they were wider, and not so crowded as those she had seen before. Her first thought was, what an immense place London must be, but when they went on and on, turning up here, and down there, and she saw no end of houses, the not unnatural fear presented itself that perhaps her driver might have lost his road. In the terrible crowd they had passed through, it seemed to her the most probable thing imaginable that he should do so. But while she was engaged in speculations as to whether she could ever have courage, if this should really be the case, to seek a better-informed driver for herself, her carriage drew up at a large green gate.

The coachman alighted, and rang the bell, which after a considerable pause, was answered by a neat, pleasant-looking maid-servant. She stared in blank amazement at the cab and its occupant, an amazement which was increased by the man's announcement, that this was a young lady, apparently from "furrin parts," whom he had been directed to bring to Miss Beville's boarding-school.

The girl appeared at first too much bewildered for speech, until, seeing the coachman let down the steps, open the door, and pull out Margaret's box, preparatory to assisting herself to alight, she recovered the use of her faculties, and came hastily forward, exclaiming—

"Stop, stop, there must be some mistake. We don't expect any young lady from foreign parts, or from any parts just now. There must be some mistake."

"No mistake of my making, I'll be bound," said the man doggedly. "A sailor, a Frencher as I take it, although he spoke English pretty well, puts this here Miss into my cab, and says as how I is to drive her to Miss Beville's boarding-school, Hampstead, and if this ben't Miss Beville's boarding-school, Hampstead, I don't know what is."

"But," persisted the servant, "both my ladies are from home, and the whole house is in a mess with painters and paperers. We were never told to expect any young lady. There is not a decent hole or corner to put her in. There must be some mistake."

"I am certain," said Margaret, "that it was to the Misses Beville, Hampstead, that I was desired to go. I don't in the least care what kind of room I sleep in, but I do hope you will allow me to come in, were it only for this one night. I am a perfect stranger here, I do not know a single person in London, nor any other place that I can go to."

The girl looked embarrassed and distressed. The faltering sadness of Margaret's tones touched her, and she was evidently unwilling to turn her from the door. At this moment a harsh voice was heard from the house, crying—

"Betsy, Betsy, where are you? What are you about?"

"There is Mrs. Smith calling me," she said. "I will run and tell her all about it, and see what she says."

She closed the gate behind her, but the house was not far from the road, the evening was calm and still, and every word of the elder and higher-voiced speaker was perfectly audible to Margaret and the coachman.

"A young lady come to our school just now!" were the first words they heard, apparently in answer to Betsy's communication. "Nonsense! Tell her that she has made a mistake, and that we expect no young lady till after the vacation."

Betsy's voice was again heard, though her words did not reach them.

"A single night's lodging, did you say? Knows no person in Lunnon," almost screamed Mrs. Smith, "depend upon it she is an impostor, an arrant impostor. Take my word for it she is an accomplice of the gang of thieves that are going about breaking into honest folks' houses. A night's lodging truly! that she might let in her friends in the night-time to cut all our throats and rob the house. But I'll soon settle her; I'll let her know I am no fool to be imposed upon by the like of her."

Again Betsy interposed, and again the harsh voice was heard exclaiming—

"Very like a young lady, forsooth! Very like a fiddlestick! Repectable-looking luggage!—empty boxes to be filled with our silver forks and spoons, I'll be

bound. Don't be a fool, Betsy. Go you and call a policeman to take her into custody. I'll find her a night's lodging in the police-office, that will set her better than one in our house. A French sailor! I daresay. The Frenchers are all beggars and impostors. A fine young lady truly! but I'll soon unlady her."

Margaret listened almost sick with apprehension. What a policeman or police-office was she did not know, but the word "custody" was distinct enough to conjure up visions of horror. And how could she ever convince this terrible woman that she was no impostor, or who could she find to defend her. Her terror was increased by the change in the looks and manner of her coachman.

"Come, come, Miss," he said roughly, "you bundle out of my cab; I'm not going to have any hand in this business; I'm not going to be dragged to the police-office as your accomplice, I can tell you, so you bundle out if you please. But first you pay me my lawful fare for bringing you all this length; and if you don't I'll give you in charge to the police myself. So you had better look sharp, I can tell you."

Margaret was a girl of spirit. Her courage rose as the necessity for it increased. She drew out her purse, which, thanks to Norah's care, was pretty well supplied, and, with an air of quiet self-possession and dignity, demanded how much she owed him, without condescending to notice his uncivil speech. This composure in manner in one so young and so gentle look-

ing, staggered the man even more than the sight of her well-filled purse, and without directly answering her, he muttered—

"I don't think the old dame is in the right box after all. I take it you are a real lady, and wouldn't cheat any one."

Time had been afforded for this short colloquy by Betsy's having stopped the indignant Mrs. Smith in her progress to the gate, to remind her of the letter which had arrived a few days previously, addressed to Miss Beville, and which might possibly contain an announcement of the intended arrival of this same young lady. The result of this suggestion was, that Mrs. Smith, instead of directly accusing Margaret of imposture as she had intended, merely demanded, in an unceremonious manner, and with sharp suspicion in every look and tone, who she was? where she came from? and what she wanted there at this time of night?

In putting her hand into her pocket for her purse, Margaret had accidentally found Sir William's letter to herself, which Norah had given her at the last moment at Bordeaux, because it contained Miss Beville's full address, which she feared she might forget; and re-assured by the possession of such a document, she replied to Mrs. Smith with the same composed, almost dignified manner, she had displayed to her driver.

"My name is Margaret Cecil. I have been living in the south of France. It was my relation, Sir William Cecil, of Cecil Abbey, who arranged with Miss

Beville that I was to be her pupil. If you doubt my word, you can read Sir William's letter to me in which he informs me of this, and desires me to come to England without delay."

The housekeeper received the letter with an embarrassed grunt. The Sir William, and Cecil Abbey, sounded a little formidable. It would certainly be awkward to send the relation of a Sir William to the police-office. Margaret, in her ignorance of the ways of the world, had never calculated upon the effect she might make by giving her uncle his full title, and had only done so from a simple desire to be as circumstantial as possible in a case where her word was doubted.

The handwriting of the old Baronet was peculiar, and Betsy, peeping over the housekeeper's shoulder, as she slowly read the letter, exclaimed—

"La, Mrs. Smith, if that ban't the very writing that was on the back of that letter I was a speaking of. It is all so straight up and down like, and so big, I'd know it again anywhere. And now I think of it, don't you remember there was a large W. A. C. in the corner? and see," she cried triumphantly, as Mrs. Smith turned over the page, "he does sign himself William Arthur Cecil; that's W. A. C. as neat as can be."

The W. A. C. seemed to carry some conviction to Mrs. Smith's suspicious mind, and it was strengthened by Margaret's quietly mentioning the name of Sir William's banker, and saying that if Mrs. Smith sent to him she could get all the satisfaction she desired,

as he knew of her being expected. In a somewhat ungracious manner, for she was vexed at having made the mistake, she signified her willingness that Margaret should alight, and desiring Betsy and the coachman to bring in the young lady's luggage, she led the way to the house, grumbling all the time about the trouble she would cause, and the inconvenience to her Mistress, of young ladies coming in vacation time. Margaret's limbs ached and trembled with weariness as she followed her conductress along the gravel walk, across a large, lofty vestibule, up a wide staircase, and through the long, deserted, melancholy-looking schoolroom, into a small room, where she was told she might remain until a bedroom could be prepared for her.

The room was very small, but comfortably furnished, and its quietness and solitude made it seem a perfect paradise to Margaret, after the noise and turmoil to which she had been all day exposed. She took off her bonnet, seated herself in an inviting-looking arm-chair, and leaning her hot, aching head against the side, she felt that she desired nothing in the world except to be left there alone and in peace.

In a few minutes she heard a quick, active step cross the uncarpeted floor of the schoolroom, there was a light tap at her door, and then Betsy's pleasant face looked in.

"If you please, Miss Cecil, the cabman is waiting to be paid."

Margaret started. She had forgotten that Mrs.

Smith's appearance had prevented her from paying him. Her purse lay upon the table, and she gave it to Betsy, begging her to give him what was right, as she knew nothing about it.

Betsy smiled and shook her head as she weighed the purse in her hand.

"And what do you know about me, Miss Cecil," she asked, "that you should trust me in this way? How do you know that I may not keep half this money to myself, and say I paid it to the cabman?"

"Oh, you could not do such a thing," said Margaret simply. "Particularly not to me, alone in this strange land, and with no one to help me."

"No, indeed, I could not. I will pay the man what is just, and bring you back every farthing quite safe;" adding, as she went out of the room, "where Mrs. Smith's senses could be when she took her for an impostor, I can't think. She is the pleasantest-looking young lady I ever saw, though that is saying a good deal, for I am sure I like some of our Misses dearly. I wish one or two of them were here now, to cheer her up a bit, she looks so sad and wearied. But I'll take care to get her a good tea, and to get her bed soon ready."

It was nearly half an hour before Betsy reappeared, and when she did so, she found the poor girl fast asleep in the arm-chair. She had brought up the tea-tray with her, and proceeded with noiseless and cautious movements to cover the table, and to arrange upon it

all the good things she had been able to persuade Mrs. Smith to give her. When her work was done, she surveyed it with considerable satisfaction, set in a chair for Margaret, and then gently and kindly awoke her.

Margaret was at the moment dreaming of being deserted and disowned by all her friends, of being turned out of doors in a cold, wintry night to beg for her bread in the noisy, crowded streets of London, and a more pleasing contrast could scarcely be imagined to the dreary picture her fancy had been painting, than the comfortable one her bodily eyes were called upon to survey. The pretty little round table, with its white table-cloth, the tea-pot and the hissing kettle, the nicely-toasted muffin, the French roll, the small jar of honey, and above all, the kindly smiling face which invited her to enjoy them.

"Mrs. Smith was glad to give me something nice for you," said Betsy, much gratified by Margaret's praises of her comfortable-looking tea-table, "because as how she is afraid I may tell some folks of the stupid mistake she made about you; and I hope you will make a good tea, for I am sure you look to want it much."

And Margaret did want it much. She had tasted no food since breakfast, except a hard biscuit which she had taken about twelve o'clock. She fancied that she was too tired to be hungry, too tired to eat; but she soon found that she was mistaken. She was aston-

ished at the appetite with which she enjoyed her meal, at the strength and refreshment which she derived from it, and at the new spirit of hope and cheerfulness with which she began to view her present situation and future prospects.

She was now able to forget the disagreeable harshness of Mrs. Smith's tones and manners, to allow that her suspicions were not unnatural, and to feel more amused than distressed at the recollection of the dilemma in which they had placed her. She began to look out with interest and pleasure into the large, handsome garden behind the house, and to speculate cheerfully on the pleasant hours she might pass there with the new companions to whom she was to be introduced. She could appreciate the neatness and comfort of the small bedroom into which Betsy ushered her, and heartfelt expressions of thankfulness mingled with her earnest prayer for guidance and protection.

"I surely must either see Arthur to-morrow, or hear from him," was her last thought at night, and her first hope in the morning. But hour after hour passed and no visitor came, and the postman left no letter for her. She tried hard to wait patiently and trustfully, and to banish the gloomy fears which beset her mind. She had not the least suspicion of any neglect or unkindness on the part either of Arthur or the Baileys, but she greatly dreaded that some terrible accident or illness prevented them from either coming or writing to her. In the course of the day

she confided her fears to the kind-hearted Betsy, and was a good deal comforted with the view she took of the matter.

"Depend upon it, my dear young lady, if anything had been wrong you must have heard of it. All the family could not be ill at the same time. They will have been from home when your letter arrived. Everybody travels about, or goes to pay visits to their friends, during the midsummer vacation. Or who knows how long a letter may take to go from Southampton to their place? It is a long way, I fancy. Perhaps they may be reading it for the first time just now, so no wonder they are not here."

This last suggestion was perfectly satisfactory to Margaret. She understood the geography and relative distance of the two places better than Betsy did, but she was acquainted with no surer or more speedy delivery of letters than what she had been accustomed to in their secluded valley in France, where a letter sometimes took a week or two to come twenty or thirty miles, and where upon the average more letters were lost than were delivered. So she was able to laugh at her own anxiety, and to wait patiently until she could receive an answer to her second letter, which she wrote and despatched upon this day.

The real state of the case was, that supposing them perfectly informed of Sir William's plans, she had not mentioned in her short and hurried note, written on board ship, the address of the ladies to whom she was

going; so that Mr. Bailey and Arthur were obliged to wait until they could obtain positive information upon this point before they could set out to meet her. They were annoyed at the delay, but had not the least apprehension of any unpleasantness arising to the poor girl from it. They naturally supposed that Sir William must have arranged for her proper and comfortable reception.

The day following Margaret's arrival brought an assurance to Mrs. Smith that she had done right in admitting her. She received a letter from Miss Beville announcing that Margaret might be expected, directing that she should be received with all possible respect, and that immediate intimation should be sent of her arrival, in order that one of the ladies might return to London to take charge of her. Mrs. Smith's manner became much more gracious after the receipt of this letter, but she could not help expressing her regret at the thought of shortening her ladies' enjoyment by summoning them home so much sooner than they had intended.

"But," said Margaret eagerly, "there is surely no necessity for that. Tell Miss Beville that I am quite happy and comfortable here under your charge, and that she may trust me to do nothing, and to go nowhere without your advice and consent; and surely I may be safe enough in that case."

This assurance of Margaret's confidence in her discretion and kindness, was peculiarly gratifying to Mrs. Smith, as her conscience told her she had not deserved

it. She soon conceived a strong esteem and liking for her unwelcome visitor, when she observed her invariable cheerfulness and contentment in a situation which most girls must have thought very irksome; and a little circumstance which occurred a few days after her arrival, strengthened these feelings still more.

The Misses Beville had received the present of a very handsome piece of work from one of their former pupils. It was intended for the cover of an ottoman, and, before leaving home, they had given orders to the upholsterer to make one of the proper dimensions, directing him to bring it home when made, and fit on the work in their own house to avoid any risk of its being soiled. Whatever might be Mrs. Smith's faults of temper, she was certainly a faithful, attached servant. She had been with her present mistresses for a great many years, and took the most lively interest in all their concerns. This affair of the ottoman seemed to her a very important one, and she took many a walk to the upholsterer's to see how it was progressing, and whether her mistresses' orders were carefully attended to. She was excessively anxious that it should be all ready before they returned home, and proportionally delighted when it did actually arrive, and she found that it was in every respect what had been wished.

But, alas! when the work was brought out of its depository and fitted to the ottoman, it was discovered that the fair workwoman had miscalculated the length of the border. Nearly a quarter of a yard must be added

to it before it could be made to meet round the ottoman, which yet was exactly the proper size for the piece of work intended for the top. A very handsome scroll pattern went round the edge of it, so that the upholsterer's first proposal to make another ottoman the proper size for the border, and take a little off each end, could not be carried out, and neither he nor Mrs. Smith could devise any other plan.

Mrs. Smith was much annoyed at the idea of her ladies' disappointment, and as her grief was never very silent, Margaret was soon made acquainted with the melancholy fact. She asked to see the unfortunate border.

The pattern was a running scroll, intermixed with leaves and flowers, and after considering it carefully for some time, she said she believed she could add to it in such a manner as not to disarrange the harmony of the original pattern. She and Norah had been accustomed to draw patterns for themselves for the aprons and shawls which they embroidered, and she felt little doubt but that she could throw out a branch at one end of the scroll which would look quite natural and make the border complete. Mrs. Smith felt very doubtful of her powers, and a little unwilling to trust the precious work into her hands. But the upholsterer and Betsy took her part, representing with truth, that even if she failed, matters could not be worse than they were; and she finally consented to allow her to make the trial. She had the keys of all her mistresses' depositories, and fur-

nished Margaret with the pencils, colours, and brushes necessary for drawing the pattern.

Margaret began her task immediately, and before evening presented the admiring Mrs. Smith with the sketch of a beautiful branch of a rose-tree, drooping in a most graceful manner under the weight of one or two full-blown roses, and several buds in all different stages. She was perfectly delighted, and accompanied her with the utmost alacrity and zeal to seek the wools necessary for carrying her design into execution.

The execution was more difficult than Margaret had expected. She was not accustomed to the square masses of shade which cross-stitch work naturally assumes, and her first rose was picked out many a time before it satisfied her. But she possessed an excellent taste, great skill and experience, and most untiring perseverance, and these were perfectly successful in the end. Mrs. Smith, Betsy, and the upholsterer, all declared her branch the most beautiful part of the whole work, and herself the cleverest workwoman in the world. Mrs. Smith was unwearied in her praises of her industry, her perseverance, and above all, her cheerfulness while sitting by herself working from morning to night.

"I never before saw a young lady," she said to the acquiescing Betsy, "who could be so contented and happy, singing away at her pleasant little songs, and looking always so smiling, while the whole day is spent in stitching, and stitching, at that weary work, and not a creature but you and me to speak to, and nothing to amuse her."

As we know of old, Margaret did not like work, and of course she found it peculiarly irksome at this time, when she had no one to talk to, when her mind was full of sad thoughts of the past, and of many anxious ones of the future. But she had undertaken the task, and must complete it, and remembering Norah's oft-repeated words—"If our work is disagreeable, it is foolish to make it worse by grumbling," she was determined that what *must* be done, should be done cheerfully. And so she went on, day after day, with the most patient industry, resolutely driving away every idle wish that her task were completed, every vain regret that she had undertaken it, and carefully cherishing every happy and hopeful train of thought which suggested itself.

Still it was a great satisfaction to put in the last stitch, to take down the work to Mrs. Smith, to help her to measure it round the ottoman, and to find that it was exactly the proper length. It was with an exquisite feeling of liberty that she ran out to the garden, determined to give up the whole afternoon to the enjoyment of perfect idleness, wandering about admiring the plots of flowers, in all their summer richness and beauty, in watching the bees and butterflies, listening to the song of bird and of insect, and luxuriating in the fresh and balmy air. During the days which she had so constantly devoted to her work, she had often sighed for time to enjoy some of the new books with which Mrs. Smith had furnished her from

Miss Beville's book-case. But on this first day of liberty, she felt too much delighted with being again in the open air, to care very much to read or do anything, except enjoy the pleasures which presented themselves gratuitously to eye and ear. She remained out of doors until she was summoned to tea, and after tea was crossing the hall with the full intention of remaining in the garden till bed-time, when the bell of the outer gate rang. She paused until Betsy answered it, having always a vague expectation that every visitor to the house might be Arthur. This expectation had been so often disappointed, that it was more from habit than anything else, that she now waited to see who was coming in. But at the very first glimpse, when the gate was opened, she gave a scream of joy, and making her way down the gravel walk, she scarcely knew how, she was in a moment in Arthur's arms. Long and anxiously as she had expected him, she could scarcely believe that it was her own Arthur who now held her closely pressed to his heart. Her joy was too great for words, almost too great for belief. She never after could remember anything that had taken place, until she found herself in the little room beyond the schoolroom, sitting between Arthur and their kind friend Mr. Bailey, and Betsy bustling about with all the alacrity of kindness, to prepare tea for the unexpected guests.

In other circumstances, Mrs. Smith might have grumbled at what she might have considered an un-

warrantable intrusion. But Margaret had become an especial favourite, a privileged person. She seconded all Betsy's preparations with the most hearty good will, and came up after tea dressed out in her best gown and cap, and all smiles and courtesies, to report to Mr. Bailey the good health and conduct of his young friend, to hope that he was satisfied with her care of her, and to show him a letter which she had received from Miss Beville a few days previously, authorizing her to give Miss Cecil into Mr. Bailey's charge if he should desire it.

Mr. Bailey explained that he wished Margaret to remain where she was for that night, but that he and Arthur should come for her the following morning, when he wished her to accompany them to his brother's house, a few miles from London, where he proposed that they should remain till the end of the vacation.

Mrs. Smith promised that Margaret should be ready to go with them at any hour they named, and expressing great satisfaction at the prospect of the dear young lady getting a little pleasure, she considerately withdrew, and left the three friends alone.

"You must have been very dull here alone, Margaret?" remarked Mr. Bailey when Mrs. Smith was gone.

"No, no," she answered cheerfully, "I have got on very well. All the servants, and particularly Betsy, have been very kind and attentive to me; and Mrs. Smith has allowed me to take any books I like out of the book-case I had this nice little room all to myself,

and could go to the garden whenever I liked. Only I was a little bit afraid that something must be wrong, you and Arthur were so long of coming to see me."

"But you have never asked why we were so long of coming," said Arthur.

"Oh, I did not care about it, when I had you safely with me again."

"You did not think us unkind, then, Margaret?" asked Mr. Bailey.

"Unkind! Oh, no! How could I?" she answered earnestly. "I suppose my first letter was lost."

"Can you not suppose that your first letter contained not the least scrap of information as to what quarter of the British Isles you were bound for?" he asked again, laughing. "We could not even read the post-mark, and had not the least clue to find out in what direction we ought to seek you."

"How very stupid I was. But I fancied Sir William would tell you all about my school."

"No, indeed," said Arthur, "we never had heard that Sir William's plans were fixed, until we got your letter, which told us you were on board *a* ship, had met with very kind friends, and hoped soon to see us, and that was all you said. We thought that perhaps you might make your appearance at our parsonage some day; and could not leave home, or write to you, you know, till we heard from you again, or from Sir William, to whom Mr. Bailey wrote to ask where you were."

"Sir William's answer and your second letter came upon the same day," continued Mr. Bailey, "but in the meantime, this young gentleman had caught cold, and we were forced to wait until he was able to travel. I did not write to tell you we were coming, because I saw from your letter, that you did not calculate upon the speed of English postage, and so would not be made anxious by our delay, and we were not very sure when we should be able to start, or how quickly we could make out the journey. But it is all right in the end, and we must enjoy ourselves as much as possible, now we are once more together."

This seemed almost an unnecessary injunction. Margaret was of a character to enjoy everything that was at all enjoyable, and Arthur seemed to receive a new capacity for happiness, and even gaiety from her presence.

The fortnight that remained of the midsummer vacation passed only too quickly. Mr. Bailey's brother and his family did all they could to contribute to the happiness of their guests. The young people were all older than Margaret, but they were kind, pleasant, and companionable. And while they took much pains to show the Cecils everything worth seeing in their neighbourhood, they were at the same time considerately careful, that the brother and sister should be allowed to be as much by themselves as they felt inclined.

This intercourse with young people of her own rank,

was of much use to Margaret. She was perfectly lady-like in her manners and appearance, but still there were little customs and observances, with which she was totally unacquainted, and which she learnt more pleasantly from these kind friends, than she could have done from her new school-companions.

At the end of the fortnight, Mr. Bailey took her back to Hampstead, introduced her to her governess, who had by that time returned home, and then Arthur and she were again parted for six months.

Her heart felt more heavy at this parting than it had done when Arthur left France. But she struggled hard to be brave and cheerful; to look forward hopefully to the Christmas vacation, which she was to spend in Devonshire, and in the meantime, to exert herself to the utmost to do her duty perfectly, and to bear cheerfully any little annoyances that might arise.

CHAPTER II.

MARGARET AT SCHOOL.

Mr. Bailey was not perfectly satisfied with the appearance and manners of Miss Beville, in his intercourse with her. She was extremely grave and dignified, and he also thought much too condescending; she seemed to look upon Margaret too much as her inferior. He knew that her school had a high reputation, that she was considered a clever and liberal-minded, as well as conscientious instructress; and there was nothing harsh or unkind in the expression of her very intellectual countenance. But she looked cold, unbending, and unsympathizing, and he feared that Margaret could not be very happy under the charge of a person of that character, accustomed as she had been to the deep tenderness, the warm, devoted affection of her loving Norah.

But whatever fears he might have, he could not in any way alter her situation, and he carefully concealed from her the unfavourable opinion he had conceived, only displaying towards her even more kindness than usual, and urging her with increased earnestness to write very frequently, and very freely, both to Arthur

and to his sister, and to confide to them all her little griefs and troubles.

Mr. Bailey was generally a correct reader of character, but in Miss Beville's case he was completely mistaken. Her feelings were naturally quick and warm, and the interest and sympathy she felt in her young pupils peculiarly keen. When she first began her new occupation, many years before the time I write of, she was very young. She had been educated in a retirement almost as secluded as that to which Margaret had been accustomed, and her natural temper was as frank and confiding as hers. She felt inclined to love all her pupils as her younger sisters, gave them credit for feelings as pure and honourable as her own, and was perfectly unprepared for the little meannesses, the envies, the jealousies, and above all the deceitfulness which are so often the characteristics of ill-educated school-girls.

The consequences might have been foreseen. She was imposed upon by the artful and designing; her kindness and indulgence were abused by all; and in short, she was taught the painful lesson of how much wickedness may be found in the hearts even of the very young and apparently innocent.

At the close of the third session, the painful disclosure was made of some most disgraceful transactions which had been taking place under her roof, and, it was hinted, with her connivance. Some of her pupils whom she had most loved and trusted, were proved to be implicated; and in the minds of the better disposed,

there had been infused such a feeling of distrust and even contempt for their governess, as made their parents judge it better to remove them to another school.

In the first bitterness of disappointed feeling, Miss Beville was inclined to give up her establishment, and seek some other occupation. But this she found could not be done. Through a train of unlooked-for misfortunes, she and her sister had been left wholly dependent upon their own exertions. They had many influential and well-connected friends who had done much to assist them in their present undertaking, but who must be displeased if they abandoned it, and might probably refuse to assist them in any other way.

She was therefore obliged to persevere. Her friends exerted themselves to remove the imputations which had been cast upon her character, her school gradually recovered from the blow it had received, and in the course of a few years, attained a reputation of a very high order. But Miss Beville was from that time a changed person. The open frankness of manner which had been so attractive to young and old, was gone, and gone too was the pleasant, happy smile, which spoke of so much lightness and youthfulness of heart. She seemed in the course of a few months to have grown from the gay, happy girl, into the grave and dignified woman.

In truth, she had felt the disappointment of all her hopes very bitterly. She had deeply and sincerely loved many of her pupils, and it was a severe trial to find how misplaced that affection had in many cases

been, and to see that it had been taken advantage of for the basest ends. And self-reproach was added to her other griefs. On reviewing the experience of the last two years, she was forced to acknowledge that she was at least partly to blame for what had occurred. She saw that she had been too intimate and familiar with her pupils before she had become well acquainted with their character, had placed herself too much upon their level, that she had allowed herself to conceive too hasty and violent likings for those whose appearance and manners interested and pleased her, and had then allowed a too hastily formed affection to warp and blind her judgment.

In endeavouring to remedy these defects of her own disposition, she went into the contrary extreme. In endeavouring to give her manner a gravity and reserve which was not natural to her, she made it stiff and formal, and in endeavouring to check her too easy credulity—her propensity to be pleased with every new pupil—she taught herself to be suspicious, and to be a little too apt to take prejudices against instead of in favour of strangers.

Such a prejudice she had conceived against Margaret. From the information Sir William had given concerning her former history, and from what she had heard in other quarters, she had been led to suppose that Margaret had been brought up by a profligate father, and by a mother whose conduct had been such as to make her friends disown her; and that since their

death she had been left to the sole guardianship of a common French peasant and his wife. In these circumstances it was natural enough that she should not expect to find her new pupil a great acquisition to her establishment, either in principles, manners, or acquirements. All the praises which Mrs Smith had been bestowing upon her, Miss Beville set to the account of the gratitude which had been excited by her able assistance in the ottoman business, and therefore not much to be trusted to. Unaware of the great simplicity of Margaret's character, she was inclined to be offended with the quiet self-possession of her manner upon her first introduction to herself, to think it unnatural, and the indication of a tendency to forwardness and presumption, and to endeavour to repress this supposed tendency by an increased assumption of dignity and reserve.

Margaret felt chilled by this reception from the new governess whom she was anxious to love, as well as respect and obey, but she was not so much awed or distressed by it as a girl of a more dependent character might have been.

"I am to do my duty in all cases, to take things as I find them, and make the best of them," was her reflection, as she meditated, in the privacy of her own room, upon the cold repellent manner of Miss Beville. "I cannot make her pleasant and kind if she is not; I cannot make her like me if she does not choose to do so, and there is no use in my thinking more about the

matter. My part is to take especial care that I give her no reason to dislike or be offended with me."

The simple straightforward line of conduct produced by such reasoning was exactly that best fitted to dispel Miss Beville's prejudices. Margaret was perfectly respectful but never servile, constantly ready and willing to render any little service or attention that might be required, but never too humbly solicitous to please or to win favour. In all her dreams of the future, one of her most earnest wishes had been, that she might be able to love and confide in Miss Beville, as she had been accustomed to do in Norah. But the thought of the impression she might herself make had never entered her mind. She was not of a nature to be very solicitous about the feelings with which she might be regarded by one with whose character she was totally unacquainted, and she was too sincere to feign anything she did not feel. This independence and uprightness of character could not fail to be observed by Miss Beville, and in time to dispel her prejudices. She learned first to esteem and respect Margaret, and then to love her as she deserved to be loved, and before six months had elapsed, she was forced to acknowledge that the despised and suspected French girl had become her favourite pupil, and her trusted and intimate friend.

But I am going on too fast and too far. And I have forgotten during all this time to introduce you to Miss Emma Beville, the other sister. Owing to her delicate health, and to the indolence caused by that

delicacy, she took little share in the active management of the establishment. She had exquisite taste in music and drawing, and took the superintendence of these departments, but she left all other matters entirely to her sister's care. Her sister's love for her almost amounted to idolatry, and her anxious solicitude for her happiness and comfort, were more like that which a tender mother feels towards her weak and helpless infant, than like any affection which usually subsists between sisters nearly of an age. Miss Beville's first wish was to save her darling Emma from every trouble and anxiety, and had she not feared that such a total withdrawal from all active concern in the business of the establishment, might be supposed to proceed from incapacity, she would willingly have had her take no charge of any kind, but sit in the house as a sort of queen, to enjoy all the luxuries and pleasures with which she could provide her.

Emma did not share in her sister's prepossessions against Margaret. On the contrary, the specimen of her taste and skill in drawing presented by the ottoman border, had led her to look forward with much pleasure to getting her for a pupil, and Margaret's unobtrusive gentle attentions to herself as an invalid confirmed the favourable impression, and made her conceive a warm affection for her soon after their first introduction.

With the masters who attended the establishment, she was also a great favourite. It was pleasant to teach

a pupil, who to great natural abilities united such an earnest desire for improvement, such industry and perseverance; who was never contented to leave any subject until she thoroughly understood it, and who was never ashamed to confess her ignorance in any matter, and to seek for information.

But here Margaret's favour stopped. She was not much liked by her companions. She did not like any of them very much, and she had too little scruple in allowing this to be very plainly seen. She had never had companions of her own age and rank, she had never been accustomed to the faults so common among girls carelessly brought up, had too little patience with them, and did not take pains enough to seek out the good points in those in whom she saw so much to condemn. She could not understand the indolent, grudging spirit in which so many indulged in regard to their studies, a spirit which led them to learn as little as they possibly could, and to grumble a great deal over the little they did learn. And as little could she sympathize with the mean envies and jealousies of others, the desire they displayed to detract from the merit of every one who entered into competition with them, and their triumph at the defeat and mortification of a rival. She was astonished at the selfishness and want of energy and earnestness in almost all; at their trifling, unreal way of thinking and judging, at the importance they attached to things she felt to be scarcely worth a thought, and their indifference to other matters which she had always thought

of the first moment. But I believe I shall best express her feelings towards her new companions by repeating her words to Miss Bailey, in a conversation they had upon the subject during Margaret's Christmas visit to Devonshire.

This visit was the more enjoyed by the whole party, on account of their having been kept in considerable uncertainty as to whether it was to take place or not. Sir William Cecil had at one time intimated his intention that Margaret should pass her Christmas at his house, in order that he might himself judge of her proficiency in her various studies. But much to the joy of the young people, Lady Cecil persuaded him that the presence of a school-girl would be very inconvenient at a time when they expected their house to be filled with distinguished and fashionable guests. So Margaret's introduction to her august relations was deferred, and she was allowed to be happy in her own way.

And very happy she was. She was delighted with the parsonage and with the scenery around it, and perfectly satisfied with the happiness and contentment which her own Arthur's every look and word expressed. The kindness and affection the whole family bestowed upon herself did indeed deserve the warmest gratitude; but what words could express what she felt towards them for their goodness to Arthur, and for the happiness which they were the means of bestowing upon him.

The Baileys, on their side, were much pleased with the progress which she had made in all her studies,

with her description of her governesses, and with the confidence and affection she evidently entertained for them. Miss Bailey was the only one of the party who was not quite satisfied. She had been surprised at the total absence of all allusion to her school-fellows in her letters, and she was still more surprised at her silence upon the same subject now, in her free and unreserved communication on all other points.

"But, Margaret, you have told me nothing about your companions yet," she said one day when they were walking alone. "Have you met with no friend among all these twenty girls?"

"No," said Margaret abruptly, "I am not intimate with any of them."

"Indeed, Margaret! And what is the meaning of that? Among so many there surely must be one at least whom you can like."

"I don't know whether I could like them or not," she answered frankly, with a slight blush of mortification; "but they don't like me."

"None of them, dear Margaret? I cannot understand that."

"It is quite true, though. I don't know why, and I don't care. I have given them no cause to dislike me, and if they choose to do so, it is no concern of mine."

"Nay, dear Margaret," said Miss Bailey, "it ought to be the concern of us all to live in peace and amity with all around us."

"I do live in peace; I have no quarrel with any

one; and if they do not choose to be in amity with me, it is not my fault."

"You are quite sure it is not your fault, Margaret?"

"Quite. Do you not think so? Do you think it is my fault? Or how do you think I am to blame?" she asked quickly and eagerly.

"I did not say I thought you to blame, my love. But where twenty girls of different tempers and dispositions all agree in disliking one, must we not be a little inclined to suppose that the fault must lie with that one?"

"What, then, is my fault?" Margaret asked again. "I am sure I know of none. You do not believe, Miss Bailey, that I would willingly grieve or vex any one?"

"I believe that you would not do so *willingly*," with an emphasis on the adverb.

"And what more can be required of me? What more has any one a right to expect from me?"

"I think the law of love requires more, requires us to be anxious and careful not to offend even through inadvertence. I think Norah would tell us, that the law of love has no concern with what others have a right to expect from us, that its only standard is, what can I do for the comfort or happiness of those with whom God has brought me into connexion?"

Margaret was silent for some time. Her thoughts had flown away to that quiet valley, where she had learned Norah's lessons of wisdom and love, and her mind was busy recalling many scenes in which Norah

had by her conduct exemplified the law Miss Bailey had mentioned. In recalling how she had gone day after day to nurse that sick neighbour, whose fretfulness, and unthankful, unreasonable temper, had driven every other friend from her bedside; how often she had denied herself, in order to help another whose poverty was the fruit of his own idleness and careless expenditure.

"Yes," she observed thoughtfully, "Norah did all this for the sick and poor; but her case and mine were different."

"You think," said Miss Bailey smiling, "that there are no sick or poor at Miss Beville's school. But is it only to the sick and poor that we are commanded to be kind, considerate, and helpful?"

"No, no, that was not the difference I meant. But Norah did not take all that trouble in order to be loved, as you wish me to do. And that is what I don't like. So long as I am careful to do what is right, it signifies very little what others think of me, or what liking or disliking they feel for me."

"Certainly. The only question is, are you doing in all things what is right? I do not at all wish you to change your manners or conduct, in order that your companions may admire or like you. But I think the fact that not one girl out of twenty does like you, ought to make you suspect that there may be something in your manners or conduct which is disagreeable to them, which makes them feel uncomfortable. And

I think you ought to try to find out what that something is, and to alter it if you can, so as to avoid making any one feel uncomfortable."

"But," asked Margaret smiling, "suppose that mysterious something should be a right thing?"

"Then, of course, you cannot alter it. But, Margaret, is not there at least a possibility that it is *not* a right thing? and ought not you to seek very earnestly to find out what it is?"

"I suppose I ought. But cannot you tell me what you think it is? Have you not at least guessed something?"

"Of course I cannot tell exactly what it is, as I have never seen you with your companions. But I have sometimes suspected that you may be a little too abrupt in the expression of your opinions, perhaps a little too harsh in your judgments of the character and conduct of your young companions."

"But if I only say what I think. I must speak the truth in any case, and if it offends, I am not to blame."

"And you are sure you always speak the truth?"

"Surely, surely, you cannot think that I do not speak the truth?" she said impetuously.

"You may mean to do so, my love, but you may be mistaken, and you may perhaps not be careful enough to ascertain that you are not mistaken. You may believe a girl to be selfish or cold-hearted, when a little farther search into her character would convince you that she is not. Or in other cases, what you say may

be really true, but *ought* not to be so. You may express your own feelings quite sincerely, but these feelings may be very wrong, may be such as you ought not to entertain. You may really feel the dislike or contempt which you express, but perhaps you ought not to feel them."

"Yes," said Margaret thoughtfully, "I daresay I have too little patience with some of their faults. I daresay I don't make allowance as I should do. But indeed, Miss Bailey, I cannot help despising many of them; they are so trifling, they have so little idea of exerting themselves or of persevering in anything they undertake. They grumble and grumble over a lesson, and call the master hard for giving them such a long one, and say twenty times that they never can learn it, while they are not making the least effort to do so, but are wasting all their own and others' time in nonsensical, useless complaints."

Miss Bailey smiled at Margaret's vehemence of indignation; but she reminded her, that these girls' faults and folly probably arose from their education.

"They may not have been taught as you have, my dear, the duty of exerting themselves cheerfully to do whatever is given them to do. You have always had such a good example of earnest, cheerful industry in your Norah, you have always had such a strong motive for being industrious, that you have acquired almost unconsciously the habit of busy, persevering working. Many girls under the care of an over-indul-

gent mother, and in a home where there is no very urgent duty calling them to industry, where they have more than enough of time for all their occupations, acquire equally unconsciously the habit of working lazily and grudgingly. Your feeling towards them ought to be rather pity than contempt or very vehement condemnation."

"But, Miss Bailey, I cannot help thinking them very silly. They have no determination, they cannot keep a resolution after they have formed it, they cannot persevere in anything, if the least difficulty comes in the way."

"You cannot understand or sympathize in their difficulties in this respect, because your own will is naturally very determined. Your difficulty is to make yourself to give way to the wishes of others, in cases where you ought to do so. The same facility of disposition which makes it easier to them than to you to be docile and obedient, makes it more difficult for them to persevere in any resolution. But as you feel your own difficulties, so you ought to make allowance for theirs, although of an opposite kind."

"Another thing which provokes me very much," continued Margaret, "is the way they have of seeking excuses. If a girl has a certain thing to do—a drawing to copy, a piece of music to practise, or a lesson to learn—and some little matter comes in the way so that she cannot get it done, or fancies she cannot, she is quite pleased, because she has got a good

excuse; and she never recollects that she has really lost a step in whatever she is learning, never recollects that the excuse won't help her on a bit, as the lesson would have done."

"That proceeds also from an error in her education. She has been taught to look upon her lessons as mere tasks which are to be got over with as little trouble as possible. You were of an age to understand and appreciate the advantage of regular instruction before it was granted to you; you had longed so much for it, that there is no temptation to you to neglect or abuse it now. But these girls have had that privilege all their lives, and perhaps no one has ever taken the trouble to show them that it really is a privilege."

"Ah, Miss Bailey," said Margaret smiling, and shaking her head, "it is easy to say 'yes,' and 'I can see that,' 'I can understand and believe this,' when you point out the excuses to me, but how can I learn to find them out for myself?"

"I can, because I ought," said Miss Bailey quickly.

Margaret blushed, and Miss Bailey went on more playfully.

"You blame these girls for losing heart, for failing in perseverance over a difficult lesson. Now, here is one for you to exercise perseverance in learning. You must teach yourself to judge charitably, and to make allowance for those faults from which your own natural temper, the peculiar circumstances in which you have

been educated, and the careful teaching of Norah, have preserved you."

"But from what book am I to learn my lesson?"

"From the Book of Books," answered Miss Bailey earnestly. "Does it not tell you to have charity towards all men? Does it not describe charity as suffering long, and being kind, as thinking no evil?"

"That tells me that I ought to be more patient, and ready to make excuses, but not *how* to make them," said Margaret, blushing deeply at her apparent presumption in differing from Miss Bailey.

"And does this not tell you how you are to learn, my love? 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him,'" was the affectionate and impressive answer.

"Oh," said Margaret earnestly and humbly, "I had forgotten that. I ask God to give me a heart to love Him, and to keep His commandments; I ask Him to fulfil His own promise, and write His law upon my heart, but then I forget that this very thinking no evil is part of the law He has so fully promised to teach me."

"Yes, dear, that is the way with us all. We all apply God's commandments and promises in a general way, and forget to make use of them in every little particular case as it occurs."

They walked on for some time in silence, which Margaret was the first to break. Looking smilingly up in her companion's face, she remarked—

"Well, Miss Bailey, our conversation began with my accusing all my companions of the heinous crime of not liking me, and we end with the discovery that it is I who am to blame for not liking them."

"For not feeling kindly towards them at least, my dear. Of course you cannot force yourself to like every one; but, I believe, if you set rightly about teaching yourself to judge more charitably of them all, you will at least find one or two to love."

Miss Bailey did not again recur to this subject, but Margaret did not forget what had been said; and the impression made upon her mind by this conversation, was deepened by a passage in a letter she received from Norah about this time.

"You do not mention your companions," she wrote, "but I hope there are at least a few among them whom you like; and, at all events, I trust my dear girl does not forget that law of kindness and charity which ought to govern her conduct towards every one around her. Remember, my darling, that not only kindness, but even justice, requires us, before we judge any one's character or conduct, to pause until we can know the whole circumstances in which they are placed, or in which their characters have been formed."

Margaret meditated very seriously and earnestly upon the best plan of teaching herself to practise this law of kindness and charity, and the one she adopted was, I think, a very good one.

Whenever any little dispute took place between her

and any of her school-fellows, whenever she had reason to think that she had grieved and offended any of them, she took the earliest opportunity of writing down the whole circumstances exactly as they occurred. And then, some hour afterwards, when all feeling of anger on her part had passed away, she read over what she had written, and added the remarks which her cooler judgment led her to form of the whole transaction. I shall give you only one or two specimens, to make you understand her method. I shall give Margaret's own words as far as they go, but writing for her own use alone, she of course omitted many particulars which I must supply in order that you may understand the case.

The first entry I choose to copy, is dated the 15th of February. The scene is in the little room off the schoolroom, which you may remember was appropriated to Margaret's use during her solitary sojourn under Mrs. Smith's charge. This room was the sanctum of the English governess, but she very kindly allowed the older girls to go there, whenever they had any very particular or difficult occupation. Margaret was alone in this quiet room, preparing a German exercise, when Miriam Grey came in to write a letter to her mother. Margaret writes—

"She began in a lazy, listless way to arrange her paper on the desk, to unscrew the top of her ink-bottle, and seek her pen, sighing and yawning all the time, and complaining of the heat of the room, of the glare

of the sunshine, of the height of the table, and so on. At last she sat down, saying in a melancholy voice—

"'Oh, how I wish I had not promised to write to-day. I am not at all in the humour for it, and it is so tiresome to write a letter when one is not in the humour for it. Besides, I have such a very short time to do it in, it seems hardly worth while. I believe I had better wait till to-morrow.'

"And so keep your promise to your Mamma, I said sneeringly, provoked at the disturbance her silly complaints gave me.

"She coloured, looked offended, and began to write without speaking. In a few minutes she drew from her pocket her Mamma's last letter, and began to look it over. Presently she said in a happy, animated voice—

"'Oh, Margaret, did I read to you the nice account Mamma gives me of uncle Tom's admiration of Willie, and what he said about his industry at school last half year?'

"I chose to fancy that she only wanted to read this to me, in order that she might not have time to write, and said very coldly—

"No; but I don't think reading that just now will lengthen the short time you *say* you have for writing your letter.

"'I say only what is the case,' she replied angrily; 'I might have expected a little sympathy from one

who pretends such love for her own brother. But Jane Thornton is right, you have no sympathy with any one.'

"She has scarcely spoken to me since, and only in a cold formal way; and she is more intimate than she used to be with that bad girl Jane Thornton, who pretends so much sympathy and interest in all her concerns."

Margaret's remarks on this were written on the next day, and were as follows—

"I ought to have remembered how naturally indolent Miriam is, how often every one is disinclined for a certain occupation, and how disagreeable it must be to write a letter when one is not in the humour, and when one has too little time. The fire certainly was very large, and the room too hot; she is not strong, and must have felt it more than I did. I too had thought that it was very disagreeable to have the sun glaring on my paper, and the blind was broken, and could not be drawn down. Had I thought more of all this, and less of my own annoyance at her interruption, I should have pitied her; and if I had spoken at all, I should have tried to say something kind and pleasant to cheer her, and to help her to get through with her disagreeable task. But my indifference and want of sympathy about her brother was the worst, and I know how much she loves him. I am very sorry, and so much ashamed.

"Resolution.—To be very kind to Miriam, and if

she receives my advances coldly, to be patient and humble, because I know I have deserved it."

The next refers to another companion, Catherine Somerville. She had been engaged to spend a Saturday and Sunday with some very dear friends at Richmond, but on the Saturday morning, instead of the carriage coming to fetch her, as she expected, she received a note, to say that her friends could not receive her, in consequence of the severe illness of one of the children. Of course she was very much disappointed. To make her some amends, Miss Beville sent her and Margaret to carry some little comforts to a poor sick woman, an occupation which she in general enjoyed very much. Margaret's little book says—

"It was a lovely day, the walk was beautiful, and it is the very one Catherine generally prefers to all others. But to-day she could see neither beauty nor pleasure in anything. She could speak of nothing but her disappointment, and seemed obstinately determined to enjoy nothing, because this one pleasure had been denied. I thought her excessively silly, and tried to reason with her, but it only made her worse. I laughed at her; worse still—she became angry and cross, and at last we quarrelled altogether. I told her she might as well have staid at home as come out for a walk she was determined not to enjoy; and said that she really was a very disagreeable companion. Of course she was offended, and our walk was finished in sullen silence."

Remarks written in the evening.—"I wish I had

recollected how much pleasure Catherine had expected in her visit, and how surely she had counted upon making it out. No doubt it was a great disappointment, and I should have considered too, how uncomfortable it makes one to get into a fretful, discontented mood, and how difficult it is to get out of it again. If I had shown more compassion and sympathy for her at first, I daresay she might soon have got better.

"Resolution.—To remember with all the girls what Miss Bailey once said, that they have as yet known little real sorrow, and therefore they are apt to think more of little vexations and annoyances than is perhaps quite reasonable."

The next story I must tell in my own words, as Margaret's account of it is very abridged. Anna Howard was a very gentle sweet-tempered girl, but exceedingly timid and sensitive. A look of displeasure was as painful to her as the most severe reproof or even punishment could be to many of the others. She was much beloved by all her companions, and was the one towards whom Margaret felt the most attracted, different as their characters were. Anna had also begun to love her very much during the last two months, when Margaret had been teaching herself to be more kind and gentle.

One day they were in the schoolroom alone, when Jane Thornton came in, and going straight up to Anna, asked her in a peremptory insolent manner if she had written her exercise for her, as she was now ready to

copy it. Anna coloured up to the very temples, but she opened her desk and gave her out a written paper without making any remark, and Jane then left the room.

"Anna!" exclaimed Margaret in a tone of amazement and reproof, "surely you have not written Jane's exercise for her, when you know Miss Beville has so strictly forbidden us to help each other in that way?"

Anna burst into tears, and for some time could not answer. At last she said in a tone of passionate grief—

"Indeed, Margaret, I have done that, and so many very wrong things besides, and all for a girl I hate and despise. But Jane has me in her power, and she knows it; oh, Margaret, I am very miserable."

And she again gave free vent to her tears. If Margaret had too little sympathy with her companions in what she considered imaginary troubles, in a case of deep sorrow like this she could display the utmost tenderness of feeling. She sat down beside Anna, put her arms round her, kissed her, pressed her hand, and endeavoured by her affectionate caresses and sympathizing words and looks, to soothe and comfort her. Anna gradually became more composed, and explained fully the cause of her grief.

A week or two before, Anna had, from some very unusual fit of idleness, not quite completed her French exercise by the time the master came to hear her class. She was vexed about it, but not very seriously, for she knew that he could not correct the exercises until after

he had taught the junior elass in the following hour, and she intended to have hers finished and give it to him with an apology for her want of punctuality, before he was really ready for it. But it unfortunately happened that the master had been lately very much annoyed by one or two of the young ladies making a practice of this, and on this very day he made them what they called an oration upon the subject, and said he should be much displeased with any one who transgressed in this manner again.

Anna was so much vexed and alarmed at the prospect of his anger when she should confess her delinquency, that she could not acquit herself with her usual credit during the class hour, and incurred a reprimand for inattention, which, of course, did not tend to reassure her.

She remained in the room after the others had left it to finish the said exercise, and was going with fear and trembling up to the junior classroom to make her explanation, when her eye was caught by seeing that he had left his key in his desk, and the thought flashed through her mind that she might open it and put in her exercise-book among the others, so that he might never know that he had not received it in time, and had not placed it there himself. She did not pause to think of the deceitfulness of the action. She had raised the lid, placed the book under one or two of the others, and was going to close the desk when Jane Thornton came in.

"You, the good, strict Anna Howard, peeping into

Monsieur's desk," she cried triumphantly. "Well, it will be a nice story for Miss Beville next time she holds you up for an example."

Anna explained her object, and entreated her with tears not to betray her, but Jane refused to make any promise except upon conditions to which Anna would not at first listen.

"No," she said indignantly, "I will myself tell Miss Beville rather than act so dishonourably. I have done wrong, but not so very wrong, and I can partly repair it; I can take out my book again and take it up to Monsieur, as I at first intended."

"And I suppose you can *unsee* and *unlearn* all the hints you have been taking from his books for our next translation," sneered Jane.

It was in vain that Anna indignantly protested her perfect innocence of any such dishonourable purpose. Jane refused to believe her, and persisted in asserting that she was perfectly certain that Miss Beville would not do so either. Anna tried to be brave, and to resolve in any case to do what she knew was right, but in the end her wily tempter and her own fears prevailed, and she consented to do as Jane desired upon condition that her secret was faithfully kept. At first the transgressions she was called upon to commit were comparatively trifling, but of course each one increased the difficulty of confession, and as Jane felt her power greater she used it more unmercifully, and required more dishonourable services from her victim.

Such was the tale Anna now told. Margaret's own nature was so perfectly, fearlessly upright and straightforward, that she could not understand how Anna could ever have placed herself in such a situation. She could not allow for her excessive timidity, and she did not consider the really great difficulty one of her character must find in resolving now to confess all to Miss Beville. She saw that this was the only course that could be followed, and she soon grew provoked and impatient with Anna because she could not resolve to take it. Anna was too gentle at all times, and just now too much humbled to feel at all angry with Margaret for her contemptuous and indignant reproaches, but Margaret by them lost the influence over her weaker friend's mind, which she might have exercised had she been more patient and long-suffering. Anna could not believe that Margaret saw or understood all the difficulties of her case, or she would not, she thought, speak so harshly, and therefore she did not feel herself bound to follow her advice.

The conclusion of the matter was, that the assistance Anna had given to Jane was discovered, and Jane believing the discovery to have been made by Anna, in revenge told Miss Beville the very worst that she could. Anna's true account of the desk matter was not believed, and the great sorrow and suffering she experienced from the sense of Miss Beville's displeasure and want of confidence in her, made a deep impression upon Margaret, and taught her a most painful lesson.

As often as she read her own account of the conversation between herself and Anna, she was shocked and humbled at her own harshness, and the sight of Anna's sorrowful countenance was a constant reminder to her of her resolution to be patient, gentle, and long-suffering.

Some of her entries referred to girls who really were very blamable, and to cases where honesty and sincerity required Margaret to express her disapprobation of their conduct. But even in these cases, in the time of cool and dispassionate reflection, she could often see ground for self-blame, could find too many traces of a proud and uncharitable spirit.

Others referred to trifling disputes, in which Margaret, although right in the main, was forced to acknowledge herself an offender, for the harsh argumentative spirit she had displayed. I shall transcribe two of these entries, just as they appear.

"March 2.—Louisa Harley asked me if her drawing was correct. I pointed out a great many faults. She was much vexed, as she had taken a great deal of pains with it, and thought it very good. The faults really were there, as I said, and when she asked me, I could not help pointing them out, but I might have borne her fretfulness more good-humouredly. It was natural she should feel a little provoked, and at first a little disinclined to acknowledge the truth of my remarks. How I wish I could remember to use those little words, 'It is natural,' at the right time, and as an excuse for others, not for myself."

"March 20.—A long warm argument with Jane Kerr. I was right, I am sure. But why did I persevere in arguing when she became angry? I could not expect to convince her then, and had I left the matter alone, she might have seen afterwards that she had been wrong. I triumphed very provokingly too. I can, I think, *bear* provocation better than I once did, but I never can *forbear* as I should."

The system of self-examination which Margaret was thus pursuing, did not fail to bring her a full reward. By showing her own defects more clearly, it gradually rendered her more lenient to the faults of those around her. It was the means of teaching her a habit of earnest, prayerful watchfulness, over every thought and judgment, which, with God's blessing, wrought in her the spirit of love and charity Miss Bailey had so earnestly inculcated; and it also procured for her the affection of the better part of her school-fellows.

The censorious spirit which she had formerly displayed, the air of proud superiority which she seemed to assume, and her harsh and often unnecessary utterance of disagreeable truths, had prevented her companions from discovering the really good and amiable points of her character. But now when these defects were corrected, they were able to appreciate and love the warmth of her heart, the unselfishness and generosity of her temper, and the lively unaffected cheerfulness of her manners. While at the same time, her high tone of moral feeling, her uncompromising straight-

forward rectitude, had a most beneficial influence upon all; their willingness to be advised or even reproved by her, increasing in the same proportion as did her patience and forbearance.

She never could, she never wished to be, on intimate terms with one or two of the Jane Thornton stamp. Her dislike to every kind of artifice and falsehood continued as strong as ever. But even towards the very worst, she was anxious to make herself feel sorrow and compassion, rather than proud contempt and disgust and to be ever ready and willing to help and oblige them when any opportunity offered.

They continued to dislike her, nay disliked her more than ever, because her condemnation of their conduct became more galling as it became more reasonable. But with the others she gradually attained the rank of a universal favourite; the intimacy which she formed with three or four among the number, the affection with which they learned to regard her, lasted through all their lives, and was a source of pleasure as well as profit to all parties.

And now I am almost afraid to go on. When I was a little girl, I remember I used to like those books best which contained histories of a school life, of school scrapes, and school pleasures. And if my young readers share my predilections, I am afraid they will be disappointed and displeased, when I announce that I have already told all I mean to tell of my heroine's life at school. But if I do not adhere to this my plan, I shall have no time to give you any account of her after

life. And I wish to give you such an account, in order that you may see the fruit of all Norah's careful training and instructions, may see how the self-government that training taught Margaret to acquire, the self-discipline it taught her to exercise, strengthened her character, and fitted her for the discharge of the duties which were required from her.

But you must not imagine that the history of Margaret's after-life will present any very stirring or romantic incidents; that the duties laid upon her, the exertions required of her, will be of any very extraordinary kind. On the contrary, I am afraid you may think her life a tame and uninteresting one, and her difficulties trifling and commonplace. But I think, if you examine the matter more closely, you may perhaps be disposed to confess, that the simple domestic trials and annoyances which our heroine encounters, may be really more irksome, more difficult to bear, to a girl of her high spirit and enthusiastic temper, than those of a more romantic, spirit-stirring kind.

The three years passed at Miss Beville's had been very busy and very happy ones. To her active, intelligent mind, her lessons were a source of pleasure rather than trouble; and the affectionate interest of her governesses, the love and esteem of her companions, softened every trial, lightened every burden. All her vacations, except the last, were spent in Devonshire, and were seasons of exquisite enjoyment both to herself and her dear Arthur.

Arthur had been as busy as Margaret during these three years. His progress in all his studies had been great, and in his own peculiar, favourite mathematics, he had even surpassed the expectations of his friends, high as they had been raised. Were his life spared, and health and opportunity granted to him, he bade fair to realize his enthusiastic sister's fondest hopes, and to make himself a name, famous not merely in England, but over the whole civilized world. But in the meantime, at least, the great blessing of health was denied to him. During the first two years he spent in England, he had improved greatly in strength both of mind and body, and his affectionate friends had cherished the hope that he had got over the delicacy and weakness of his constitution; but during the next two, these hopes had been gradually blighted. More particularly in the course of the last twelvemonth, he had been subject to frequent and severe attacks of fever, accompanied with great languor and depression of spirits, requiring the most constant watchfulness, the most tender care. In these circumstances, it was impossible to think of sending him from home.

"I should be afraid to trust him with myself," Mr. Bailey sometimes half-laughingly remarked to his wife. "I should not think him safe in any circumstances, were he deprived of your watchful and motherly care."

But while they had no doubt as to the propriety of keeping him at home, it was a great trial to them to

see him deprived of advantages he could so well have improved. Mr. Bailey's mathematical knowledge was far above the average of gentlemen in his situation, and for two or three years Arthur made as much progress under his tuition as he could have done in any circumstances. But now he had outstripped his teacher. Mr. Bailey could give him no farther assistance, and he was wholly dependent upon books.

The mathematical professor at Cambridge was an intimate friend of Mr. Bailey's. He had once or twice passed a week at the parsonage, and Mr. Bailey had twice taken Arthur to pay him a visit at Cambridge. This gentleman had fully confirmed Mr. Bailey's opinion of Arthur's extraordinary talents, and had been of great use to him in advising him about his studies, and about the books he ought to read. He had urged Mr. Bailey to send him to Cambridge, and had promised to watch over his health, to take as good care of him as if he were his own son. But, as I said before, Mr. Bailey saw clearly that it was quite impossible to allow Arthur in his present state of health to leave his own care.

The last vacation before Margaret left school, was spent by the brother and sister at Cecil Abbey. Margaret had had one or two formal interviews with her great uncle, when he had called at Miss Beville's during his visits to London; but it was Arthur's first introduction to him. Sir William had intended that they should both have visited him long ere this; but Lady Cecil had died about two years before, and his

own health and spirits had been so much affected by his loss, that he could not sooner persuade himself to make the exertion of receiving them.

Now that he did become acquainted with them, he was very much pleased with both. He had expected to find them awkward and bashful, and had fretted much over the unexpected arrival of one or two distinguished visitors, a day before the young people were expected. But the first hour of their visit relieved him from all fears. The perfect simplicity of their manners, the total absence of all thought of self, gave them a quiet self-possession, which was equally removed from bashfulness and forwardness. Then Arthur's great talents were discovered by his visitors, and he was admired and praised until the old man felt revive all the pride he used to have in his once favourite nephew, Arthur's father. Arthur's personal appearance was greatly in his favour. He was strikingly handsome, and his features were of that aristocratic cast which peculiarly pleased Sir William, while his expression of high intellect made him an object of great interest to every one who saw him.

But if Sir William was most proud of Arthur, he was fondest of Margaret. Her gaiety and light-heartedness, her frank, animated way of expressing her thoughts and feelings, amused and interested him, and her gentle kindness and attention to himself, inspired him with real affection for her. Long before the six weeks had expired, he had resolved that Cecil Abbey

must be her home. He would have gladly kept Arthur too; but he knew that his progress in his studies might be retarded by such a measure, and he felt that Mr. Bailey had an undoubted right to dispose as he pleased of the boy whom he had so greatly served. But Margaret was to return for only another half-year to school, and then to come home to him, to enliven and cheer him with her presence. She was not to leave him, he laughingly said, until she got a house of her own, or until Arthur should claim her as his housekeeper.

When Margaret was told of this arrangement, she directly begged permission for herself and her brother to go to France to pay Norah a visit, before she took up her abode in her new home; and after a little demur, Sir William yielded to her eloquent pleadings and consented, and early in July the orphans were once again inmates of their old, their fondly-remembered cottage home.

But how can I describe the enjoyment of this two months' visit; the pleasure of again seeing their old familiar haunts, of again hearing the kind welcome and affectionate greeting of so many old friends, the satisfaction of seeing the comfort, the peace, the prosperity of Norah and her household; but above all, the deep, heartfelt happiness, of again enjoying the full, free, unreserved communication of every thought and feeling to that second mother whom they so fondly loved, reposing with perfect confidence upon the love and sympathy of that mother's heart, and listening

with affectionate reverence to the counsels of that mother's piety and wisdom.

Nor was Norah's enjoyment less complete. As regarded Margaret it was unmixed. She rejoiced with the fullest joy and gratitude to see her so much improved, her mind so much cultivated and enlarged, and yet retaining all its simplicity and freshness; the impetuosity of her temper softened, the rashness of her judgments moderated; and yet her heart as warm, as generous, and unselfish as ever.

But for Arthur, anxiety was largely mingled with pleasure. She could rejoice in the affection and kindness which it was so evident he had experienced from those to whose charge she had given him. She could feel thankful for the contentment and quiet happiness which it was so evident he enjoyed in his peaceful home, but she could not look upon him without the deepest anxiety for his health. He was unusually well while with her, had not a single attack of fever or languor; but his slender form, his white, attenuated hands, his delicate complexion, and feverishly bright eye, all filled her with the liveliest apprehensions. And when she bade them farewell, the thought that she might never see him again, made it more bitter to part with him than even with her own darling, as she always in her heart called Margaret.

When they returned to England, Arthur returned to his happy home with the Baileys, and Margaret entered upon her new mode of life as the mistress of her

uncle's large establishment. She found him much more infirm and older looking than when she had last seen him. He had been very unwell during the summer, and he never regained his strength. He lived for more than a year, but he was in very bad health all the time, and often suffered a great deal. Margaret was invaluable to him as a companion and nurse, amusing him with her intelligent, animated conversation, during the moments of comparative health, and bearing with so much gentle patience with the fretfulness produced by suffering. He often expressed his warm affection and gratitude to her, and regretted that he had not sooner known and learned to love her. He died in the beginning of the year after she came to live with him, and thus she was once again deprived of a home.

When his will was opened, it was found, much to the surprise and disappointment of Margaret's friends, that he had neglected to provide for her, as he had often promised he would. The will was of old date, and left all his property to the grand-nephew who inherited the title. A codicil had been added at the time when he first resolved to take charge of Margaret's education, and by it he left her and Arthur a legacy of two hundred pounds a-piece, but that was all.

Margaret was the only person who was not disappointed by this discovery. Her uncle had often spoken very openly to her about his affairs, and declared his determination to make a new will, and to provide

handsomely for both her and Arthur, but she knew well that will never had been made.

But although the pain of disappointment was past to her long before her uncle's death, it had been a bitter pain at first. She had for the last twelvemonth been learning almost unconsciously to understand that her and Arthur's schemes for their future mode of life, might very probably prove abortive in as far as they were dependent on Arthur's exertions. She had gradually and slowly learned to see more clearly his weakness, and to acknowledge that unless his health greatly improved, he never could fulfil the fond hopes she had for so long entertained. And with this conviction, it had been very delightful to her to look forward to its being in her power to provide a home for him, and such a home as should satisfy his every wish. She had dwelt with exquisite pleasure upon the visions of all the comfort and elegance she should throw around him, and of all the schemes of benevolence which it was to be their joint business to carry on.

She felt the abandonment of all these visions to be really a severe trial, and could not without much pain contemplate the probability of being hereafter almost wholly separated from that fondly-loved brother.

But the prospect of having to labour for her own subsistence did not at all add to the bitterness of the trial. She was too inexperienced to know all the difficulties she might be called upon to contend with, and to her active, energetic spirit, there was something plea-

sant and exciting in the idea of being dependent upon her own resources.

She accompanied Arthur and Mr. Bailey on their return to Devonshire after the funeral, and it was at first arranged that she should remain there, until some situation as governess could be procured for her. But Miss Beville, to whom she had written to beg her assistance in seeking such a situation, pressed her so kindly and earnestly to come to her for a few months, in order that she might gain some experience in the art of teaching, that she consented, and there we shall leave her for a month or two; and I must ask you to accompany me to Edinburgh, to be introduced to a family of distant and unknown relatives of hers, with whom she is henceforward to be closely connected.

CHAPTER III.

MARGARET'S PUPILS.

"News, news! Who'll buy my news? Great news! good news! Who'll buy my good news?" sang Jessie Cecil, as she burst into the schoolroom where her two elder sisters were busy with their lessons.

Rose, the eldest, went on practising without deigning to take any notice, and a fretful complaint of her noisy, boisterous entrance, was the only answer she received from Anna.

"My poor head and weak nerves!" exclaimed Jessie, mimicking her sister's complaining tone and affected way of putting her hand to her forehead; then turning to Rose, she exclaimed, "Well, Rose, what will you give me for my news? Come, say? Who'll buy? who'll buy my good news?"

"I have no time for nonsense," was the dignified reply.

"Nonsense! my most sage sister. And who said it was nonsense? I hope I know better than to offend the ears of the grave, the sensible, the dignified Miss Cecil with nonsense. It is the best sense and the best

news in the world. Nay, but you must and *shall* hear me," she continued, dexterously twitching away her sister's music-book, and placing it behind her back.

"Give me my book directly, Jessie," cried Rose in an imperious tone, her eyes flashing with anger.

"Not till you have heard my news," said the provoking girl, dancing back a few steps, and smiling triumphantly. "Not till you have asked to hear it. Come, Rose, condescend to show a little bit of curiosity. Only ask me one question. Only say, what is it? and you shall have news and book at once."

With a strong effort, Rose subdued the passion which was rising in her breast. She turned from Jessie without speaking, seated herself at the table, and drawing a pile of books towards her she opened one, and began to read.

Jessie looked vexed and mortified. She stood for a moment as if uncertain what to do, and then with a half smile at her own defeat, she replaced the book upon the piano, and went to caress a pretty little terrier which lay upon the hearth-rug.

"Ah, Poff, my pretty Poff," she said aloud, "you are not too sensible, or too delicate and languid to care about my news, so I will tell it to you. What do you think, my pretty Poff, of having green fields to run about in, and rabbit-holes to search, and woods to hide in? Won't that be better than walking through these tiresome dusty streets, my darling Poff?"

"Is that all your great news?" asked Rose con-

temptuously, "as if we did not all know ages ago that we were to leave town."

"So you have curiosity enough to listen, though you will not ask a question," said Jessie, looking round archly at her sister; "and I suppose such a well-informed young lady knew ages ago, that Mr. Smith had accepted Papa's offer, and all the particulars about when we go, and so on?"

"What do you mean, Jessie?" asked Anna with unusual animation. "Has Papa really heard from Mr. Smith? Are we really going to Auchenbeith?"

"Oh, ask Rose, she knew all about it ages ago," said the laughing Jessie.

Anna was beginning a fretful remonstrance, when Rose interrupted her, reminding her that it was impossible to persuade Jessie to speak common sense, or to do anything except what she chose, and promising to go down to her Mamma and get all the information as soon as she had finished learning her translation. Jessie had again recourse to her dog.

"But, my dear, darling Poff, you must not be vexed when you hear that a governess is coming. You must not imagine that she is to be a cross old frump, who will never allow us to do anything but learn lessons. No, no, dear Poff, she is such a nice, good young lady, who will herself quite like to run about in the fields, and to play at hide-and-seek with you in the woods."

While affecting to be wholly engrossed with Poff, Jessie was slily glancing through her ringlets at her

sisters. She saw them exchange looks of surprise and doubt, and satisfied that she had thoroughly aroused their curiosity, she determined not to grant too easily the information they desired. She now confined her conversation with Poff to the nonsense young ladies sometimes like to bestow upon their dogs, and which some dogs seem so fond of hearing.

"Can Papa and Mamma have really fixed upon a governess without our hearing anything about it?" Anna asked Rose, when she found that Jessie's voluntary communications had ceased.

"Quite impossible!" was Rose's decided reply.

"Oh, perfectly impossible," said Jessie; "Papa and Mamma would never dream of taking such a step without the advice and concurrence of their superlatively wise daughter, Rose. But, sweet sister, in all sisterly regard, I pray you, be not too much overwhelmed should you some day soon be introduced to your new governess." Then rising with an air of mock solemnity, she continued, "But I tremble, I tremble. My prophetic soul is darkened with gloomy forebodings. If Vatel, of fidgety memory, destroyed himself because he could get no fish for the king's dinner, to what desperate act may not the noble-minded, high-spirited Rose Cecil be driven, by the discovery that her advice and approbation are not *quite* indispensable to the welfare of this household?"

Rose coloured high with anger. But she had learned by experience. that her dignity always suffered in a war

of words with her quick-witted sister, and she went on with her occupation without deigning any reply.

Anna begged Jessie to lay aside for once her love of tormenting, and tell them truly all she knew.

Jessie glanced at Rose's lesson-book. While looking up a word in the dictionary her finger naturally pointed to the place in her book, and Jessie saw that she had only a few lines to learn. If she wished therefore to tell her news at all, she had no time to lose, and she began accordingly.

"Well, then, to show how good-natured I am, I shall forgive your shameful want of curiosity, and tell my story. But first of all, do you remember when Miriam Grey was here last year, how often she used to talk of a young lady at Miss Beville's who had the honour of bearing our illustrious name?"

"Yes, I remember Papa said that she must be a distant relation of ours."

"Exactly. And you remember that she was then living with Sir William Cecil, who had adopted her as a daughter, or a grand-daughter, or something of that kind?"

"Yes, yes, we remember. But what of her? Do go on," cried both girls at once.

"Dear me!" said Jessie, pretending astonishment, "is my poor news, news after all, and interesting too? How very strange!"

Anna made a gesture of vexation and impatience, and Jessie continued—

"Well, well, I will be generous. You must know then that Papa heard a few weeks ago, that Sir William Cecil had left this poor girl wholly unprovided for, that she wished a situation as a governess, and was even now acting as teacher at Miss Beville's. And like a good, kind Papa as he is, he thought this poor Margaret might be more comfortable with us than with strangers. Also, that having nearly reached the years of discretion without having been accustomed to governess thraldom, we might get on better with one near our own age, than with an older, and perhaps more formal person. So these two lines of thought meeting together, resulted in one course of action. He wrote to Miss Beville to ask her opinion of Miss Cecil, and that being most highly satisfactory, he wrote to Miss Cecil to make his proposals. When I was with Mamma in the drawing-room, he came to read her a letter from Mr. Smith accepting his offer for Auchenbeith, and a letter from Margaret Cecil, accepting the honourable post of cousin-governess to his three lovely and accomplished daughters."

"Oh, I am so glad," cried Anna. "It will be so much pleasanter to have a young governess, who will be a companion for us, rather than an old one who can only teach us our lessons. And from Miriam's account she must be a very nice creature."

"Very clever and accomplished too," said Rose, "and will, I hope, be very useful to us."

"And will also, I hope, appreciate my extraordinary

genius and industry," pursued Jessie archly; "but Rose, you are not going to begin that tiresome practising again. Now, do sit still and chat a little longer about my good news."

"I have no time. I cannot play this passage at all."

"Oh, never mind the passage. You cannot be expected to practise when you have such interesting things to talk about."

"I do not know what Mr. B—— would say to such an excuse," said Rose, quietly seating herself at the piano, and beginning to practise as she spoke.

"And I am sure I do not know what Signor E—— will say to me. I have not opened my Italian books since I left his class on Tuesday," said Jessie, shrugging her shoulders.

"Oh, Jessie," cried Anna, "and it does not want an hour of the time when we must go."

"Very true, my dear, horrified sister. So there is no use in beginning now. I must try some other plan." And she left the room.

"What a childish creature she is," said Rose contemptuously. "She has gone to coax Mamma to allow her to miss the class."

Rose was right. Jessie ran down stairs to the drawing-room. Mrs. Cecil, a gentle, but delicate-looking woman, was lying upon the sofa, with a small table beside her, on which were books and work. The eldest son, Henry, was writing a note at the further end of the room. Jessie with quick but light steps went up

to her mother's sofa, and kneeling upon a stool at her side, she looked in her face with an arch smiling expression of entreaty, but without speaking.

"Well, my love," said her mother fondly, "what does that look want to ask?"

"Only a little wee favour, dear Mamma. My head is so full of our new house and our new governess, that it would be quite useless for me to go to the Italian class to-day. And then we leave town so soon, it is of little consequence my missing it. And I am sure you want me to sit beside you and nurse you, you have got such a bad headache."

Mrs. Cecil shook her head and would have spoken, but Jessie prevented her.

"Now, my dear, good Mamma, you must not say No. It is very bad for a headache to be cross and disobliging."

"And very good for one to be teased into doing what one does not wish," remarked Henry ironically.

"Now you naughty, mischief-making Henry, hold your tongue, and do not meddle in my concerns," said Jessie in perfect good-humour, secure of gaining her point in spite of him. "Of course it is only because I know Mamma does wish me to stay beside her, that I consent to sacrifice my own inclinations, so far as to give up one of the few Italian lessons I can now have. And here is this new Review wants cutting up, and I know Mamma does not like to do it herself, nor Papa either. Now, I will cut it up so beautifully, there

shall not be a single ragged edge in the whole book. See, Mamma, is not that smoothly done? And are not you very thankful to have a daughter who guesses all your wishes so nicely, and who is so ready to fulfil them?"

"Ah, Jessie, you are a sad, spoiled girl. You take your own way in everything," was Mrs. Cecil's reply, with a gentle, half-reproachful smile.

"Yes, because my way is always the wisest and best. Oh, what an interesting-looking Review this is. Shall I read you this amusing passage, Mamma?"

Mrs. Cecil declined her offer, saying she liked to read an article straight through, and not in bits and patches, so Jessie went on glancing over it to herself, now reading, now skipping, and in her anxiety to get at the end of a passage, cutting up the leaves hastily and roughly, and jagging all the edges. Henry saw this with a smile, as he stood for a few minutes watching her, but he did not again interfere in her concerns, as he well knew it was useless.

"Are you not coming to your class, Jessie?" asked Rose, as she and Anna looked into the drawing-room before going out.

"No, Mamma is not very well, and wishes me to stay with her," she said coolly, with an arch smile at Mrs. Cecil.

Rose looked the scorn which she did not express. She and Anna went out, and Jessie resumed her book.

"Now, dear Mamma, if you think you can spare me,

I had better join the girls at the singing class," she said about an hour after this, starting up hastily and overthrowing the little table with books, &c. "I have not practised a note of that horribly difficult, horribly ugly scale, but I can sit far away from the piano, and so the good, old, half-blind man will not see me, and will not ask me to sing it by myself."

"Ah, Jessie, you are a sad, idle girl. But make haste, my dear. You ought to have gone to get ready sooner. You will be too late," said the gentle Mrs. Cecil, without one word or look of reproach for the mischief the giddy girl had caused, although the noise and bustle made her aching temples throb painfully.

Jessie was very late. Three o'clock had struck ere she left her own house, and when she reached the class-room the door was closed, and the lesson begun. Teaching singing in classes was then only beginning to be the fashion, and the novelty attracted a great many listeners. The class the Cecils attended was the farthest advanced of a very celebrated master, and the concourse of visitors to it was very great. The idle spectators sat on benches near the door, and Jessie had to make her way among them all before she could reach her own place, a proceeding which she felt to be very disagreeable.

She was remarkably pretty, and of that bright, animated style of beauty which catches the eye, and attracts the admiration of every one. Her expression was constantly varying, and almost constantly pleas-

ing. Her face was perhaps not fitted to express much thoughtfulness or great depth of feeling, but there was a beauty and a charm in her arch looks and gay smiles, which even the most grave and sensible would have found it difficult to resist.

Jessie was quite aware of her own attractions, and was glad to feel and to use the power they gave her in gaining a point or disarming reproof. But she was not vain. She did not like the notice she often attracted from strangers; and on the present occasion, as she stood looking through the glass door of the class-room, scanning the crowded benches among which she must pass, she was quite sincere in the muttered wish—

"Ah, if I had but a bonnet or a veil to hide this pretty face of mine, so that people might not stare at me."

She had half resolved to retreat without going in at all, when the master chanced to see her, and signed to her to come in. Her entrance excited quite enough of notice to have pleased those most desirous of attracting it, and quite enough to cover her with blushes.

To add to her vexation, the only unoccupied seat was the one next to the piano, and it she particularly wished to avoid, both on account of its being a very conspicuous place, and because, anticipating her deficiencies in the "horribly difficult exercise," she had planned to keep as far from Mr. —— as possible. She stood for a minute beside the farthest back benches,

hoping some one would make room for her there, but in vain. She was obliged, after all, to go forward, with the additional mortification of feeling that she had, in her own words, "looked very like a conceited fool, who was saying to every one, 'See how pretty I am, and how becomingly I can blush.'"

As soon as she was seated, the difficult exercise was called for. At first Jessie did not attempt it. But after a few bars Mr. —— stopped the class, and turning to her, said in his foreign accent, and with his foreign air of good-humoured pleasantry—

"I think Miss Jessie Cecil has run so fast in order to be in de good time, that she has lost de breath; I do not hear her voice at all."

Blushing deeply, she muttered some excuse, and when the singing began again she tried to join, hoping to be guided by the voices of her companions; but the movement was very rapid; the others had all practised it with the extra care its difficulty demanded, and sung much more quickly than Jessie could follow. She was thrown out, lost her place, stumbled upon a wrong note, tried again, and produced a discord very discernible even to less skilful ears than Mr. ——'s. Again the class was stopped, and again he turned to her with his provoking sarcastic smile—

"Why, Miss Jessie, I do think do running has taken away de ear as well as de breath. Will you sing that passage alone?"

Jessie could not help attempting it. She read music

very easily, and had a remarkably flexible voice, so when there was no distracting, crossing second, to confuse her, she performed her part very tolerably, only much too slow.

"Pretty well," pronounced Mr. ——. "And now Miss Cecil will sing de second, and you will sing it again tree times as fast."

But this Jessie felt was quite out of her power, and she stammered out an excuse, confessing that she had not practised it.

"Not practised it at all!" he said in surprise. "Ah then, if you please, we will rader have de silence from you than de false notes. It is a pity when de good voice and de idleness go togeder. We will go on without Miss Jessie Cecil, young ladies."

Jessie did not easily recover from the vexation all this had caused her, and when Rose, after the class, began to lecture her in a very disagreeable way upon her folly, and triumphantly to hope that she would at last learn a lesson, and not make such a fool of herself again, she could not at once rally her powers of gay impertinence, and repay Rose's contemptuous reproof with her usually ready sallies. Her utmost effort was to shrug her shoulders with a comically penitent smile, and ask Anna if she was not thankful to possess such a generous sister, who scorned to trample upon the fallen.

Farther mortification awaited her at home.

"Pray, Jessie," asked Henry when she came into

the drawing-room before dinner, "is it not the fashion just now for young ladies to keep their promises?" and he held up the unfortunate Review she had been cutting up.

"Don't tease me, Henry," she said, smiling, "my temper has been so tried and torn to-day. It is as jagged and ragged as"——

"The leaves of this book," he interrupted. "Well, I cannot understand the arithmetic some ladies employ. A hundred jags are counted as not one, and twenty pages as two hundred and eighty."

"Come now, Henry, be correct; I have cut up more than twenty pages."

"And made less than a hundred jags?" he said, holding up the book before her and displaying its untidy edges.

"And I am so exceedingly obliged to you, Jessie, for the exquisite workmanship you have put upon this glove," said her Papa, showing one she had some days before promised to mend.

"Oh," said Rose, "Jessie is a first-rate promiser; it is only a pity that she does not add a faithful performance to her other good qualities."

"And I know who is a first-rate spyer out of other people's faults, a first-rate triumpher in their vexations," rejoined Jessie archly, but still good-humouredly.

At this moment Anna entered, and in a fretful, complaining voice, asked Jessie where she had laid her paint-box, adding, that she had promised so faithfully

to put it carefully away in the drawer when she was done with it, but that it was not there.

"No," said Henry, laughing, "if Jessie promised, you may depend upon it she would not do it."

"If I promise to repay your impertinence, Master Henry, you may depend upon it I shall do it," she said, shaking her head at him in mock defiance as she ran out of the room to seek the paint-box.

"Whatever her faults may be, she is certainly remarkably good-tempered," remarked Mr. Cecil.

"Only because she does not care in the least for all we say, nor for all the annoyance she gives us," Rose pronounced sententiously.

Mr. Cecil looked displeased, and told Rose that he was inclined to think Jessie correct when she called her a first-rate spyer out of people's faults, adding, that a little more quick-sightedness as to her own, might perhaps make her more charitable.

Rose drew herself up with an air of injured innocence, and during the rest of the evening she was grave and dignified, scarcely speaking when she was spoken to, and never volunteering any remark. Certainly upon this evening Jessie appeared the most amiable of the three sisters. But I daresay my young readers must agree with me, that Margaret's position as governess to any of them could not be altogether pleasant.

In making their final arrangements with Margaret, Mr. and Mrs. Cecil had expressed a wish that she should join them as soon as she could. They did

not know she had a brother, or any other relation, in England, whom she might like to visit before settling down in her new home. And Margaret, feeling herself under great obligations to them, did not like to mention the strong wish she felt to spend a few weeks in Devonshire. She made her preparations as quickly as possible, and in less than a fortnight they received a letter announcing that she was to leave London by that week's steamer, and would be with them on the Saturday.

"How impatient I am to see this new cousin!" exclaimed Jessie, when they were all assembled at breakfast on the Friday morning. "I have drawn many pictures of her in my mind, but of course she cannot be like them all. Do you remember, Anna, what Miriam said about her personal appearance?"

"She said that she was not pretty, I think."

"But with a very intellectual, pleasing face, and lady-like manners, which is far better," interposed Rose.

"Of course Rose thinks so," remarked Jessie, with an archness which made Henry laugh.

Rose was not at all pretty. She was too sensible to care *very* much about it. But there were times when she was half conscious of a wish that she could exchange some of the steadiness and good sense upon which she prided herself, for a little portion of Jessie's beauty; but a hint from any one else that this was the case, offended her very seriously. She

retorted quickly and warmly, that of course Jessie did not think so; and that, perhaps, it was reasonable enough that *she* should value beauty highly.

"Because that is my only poor claim to superiority over my highly sensible and wonderfully accomplished eldest sister," replied Jessie, carelessly.

"How I do wish you two would give up that habit of constant wrangling," said Anna in a fretful tone. "Or if you must quarrel over every meal, you had better take them in your own rooms."

"Or suppose the sensitive Anna took her meals in her room," Jessie was beginning, when Mrs. Cecil interposed—

"Do not, Jessie, dear. Do not be so provoking, my love. You are really very impertinent to Rose sometimes."

Then desirous to give a new turn to the conversation, she asked Mr. Cecil and Henry if either knew when the steamboat might be expected.

Mr. Cecil said, not till the following morning; Henry, very probably that night.

"At all events we must have her room ready for her to-night. It would be a pity to let her feel herself unwelcome or unexpected," said Mrs. Cecil. "And that reminds me I must see Stewart about it before she goes out. I will go at once and speak to her." And she rose and left the room at a much more rapid pace than usual.

Jessie looked after her with an exaggerated expression

of surprise, and was going to make some remark about her unusual activity and decision, when Mrs. Cecil returned to ask her husband if they ought not to send to the steamboat office to request that notice might be given them as soon as the vessel was seen, so that Henry or a servant might go to Granton to meet Margaret.

"Certainly, Mother, I shall be most happy," said Henry, with a sly glance at Jessie; "and so be the first to see our new cousin."

"And, perhaps," pursued Mrs. Cecil, "if it is early in the evening, one or two of the girls might go down with you. We must wish to do all we can to make her feel at home and among friends."

"Certainly, Mother, I shall be most happy," said Jessie, returning Henry's glance, and adding, as her Mamma again left the room, "What strange metamorphosis has come over Mamma this morning? Who ever saw her move so quickly, or be so willing to take so much trouble before?"

Mr. Cecil looked up from his newspaper.

"You think yourself at liberty to remark upon your Mamma's character and conduct, Jessie," he said with some severity; "but before presuming to do so, you ought to be very sure that you are capable of understanding and appreciating them. You certainly show yourself very much the reverse, if you have not yet discovered the kindness and gentleness of feeling which make all trouble seem light to her, in comparison to

the pleasure of lessening your cousin's feelings of shyness and discomfort in coming among strangers."

For a moment Jessie looked ashamed and disconcerted. But her spirit was roused by Rose's taunting remark—"That Jessie herself having no thought for anybody or anything, could not understand these feelings in others;" and she was determined to show how easily she could turn aside reproof. She went up to Mr. Cecil, put her arms round his neck, and said with that look and smile she had so often found to be irresistible—

"And Mamma has too much kindness, dear Papa, not to be vexed when you scold your poor Jessie. Come, you must not look grave to-day, when I am so happy. Smile upon me, like a good Papa."

Then having succeeded in winning a smile, she turned, after a triumphant glance at Rose, to tease Henry about her going down with him to Granton, and so seeing Margaret as soon as he did.

Jessie's wishes were fulfilled. Soon after six they received notice that the vessel would be at Granton in an hour, and as it was a lovely May evening, no objection was made to Rose and Jessie accompanying Henry. Anna, who had all her life been somewhat delicate, and who was apt to fancy herself even more delicate than she was, declined going, saying that she would make herself useful at home, by getting tea ready for their return.

In the meantime, while the vessel was nearing its

destination, Margaret was gazing with admiration upon the beautiful town of which she had heard so much; and was endeavouring by occupying her mind, and interesting herself in all the objects around, to control the nervous anxiety she felt about her introduction to her strange relatives. She was well aware that it was worse than useless to indulge her fancy in drawing pictures of their probable character, or of their behaviour towards herself; and she had striven hard through the whole voyage to check such idle imaginings, to silence all speculations with the thought, that whatever duty God gave her, He would give her strength to perform, that what she ought to do He would enable her to do, and to wait trustingly and quietly for what He chose to send. But with all her courage and natural hopefulness of disposition, her heart beat more and more quickly as the decisive moment approached, and the questions, "How shall I be received? In what position shall I stand?" recurred again and again to her mind.

When the vessel reached the pier, and she saw many of her fellow-passengers receiving the warm welcomes and greetings of the friends who had come to meet them, and others under the protection of fathers, brothers, or husbands, safely and comfortably guided through the noisy crowd; she stood a little apart from all, feeling desolate and unfriended, and half inclined to murmur over the discomfort and dreariness of her situation.

At that moment she heard a voice inquiring if Miss

Cecil were on board, and presently a very pleasing, gentlemanly-looking young man was by her side, introducing himself as her cousin Henry Cecil, welcoming her to Scotland, and offering his arm to lead her on shore. Margaret accepted his courtesy as frankly as it was offered, and in a very few minutes found herself safely through the formidable crowd of porters and cabmen, and approaching the handsome britchska of Mr. Cecil, where the girls were waiting for them. Henry would not allow her to take any trouble about her luggage.

"My sisters are waiting for you," he said, "and when I have given you into their charge, I shall return and get it all right enough."

As soon as Jessie saw them, she sprang lightly from the carriage, and ran to meet them.

"I am as much your cousin as Henry," she said gaily, after shaking hands with her. "He was so anxious to have the pleasure of being the first to welcome you, that he would not take me on board."

Rose now also came forward, and with more composure and reserve, but with not less kindness, welcomed her cousin, and hoped she had had a pleasant voyage.

Henry put them into the carriage, and then returned with the servant to see about Margaret's luggage. While they were waiting for him, and during the drive home, both girls exerted themselves to amuse Margaret, and to point out all the objects of interest they

could see. And they were as much gratified by her frank, animated expressions of admiration and pleasure, as she was by their kindness and attention.

Anna was watching for them; Mr. Cecil was at the door to help Margaret to alight, and to give her a cordial welcome; and Mrs. Cecil came more than half-way down stairs to meet her. In short, every member of the family seemed to vie with each other in their efforts to show her kindness, and to assure her of their pleasure at her arrival.

Margaret was truly grateful. Mr. and Mrs. Cecil's cordiality was so evidently sincere, so far removed from condescension, or from a forced civility, that it made her feel herself quite at home, and enabled her at once to assume her own naturally frank and cheerful manners.

Tea passed pleasantly and socially, and soon after Margaret was glad to accept Mrs. Cecil's proposal, and go to her own room. The three girls went with her, and while Rose was enacting the part of mistress of the house, lighting the gas, inquiring if Margaret should not like more pillows, looking to see that the towels were all right, and ascertaining that her luggage had been brought up, and Jessie was chattering in her usual heedless way, the quiet, thoughtful Anna, had gently made her sit down in the comfortable arm-chair, had brought her a footstool, and offered her services to get any of her things she might require that night, so as to save her the trouble of unpacking until the morrow.

"Dear me!" cried Jessie, "to think of lazy Anna

being the first to offer to take any trouble. I am sure if I had only thought of it, I should have been so glad to do that for you."

"It would be a comfort to us all if you had occasionally a little thought about anything," remarked Rose sententiously.

Jessie made her a mock courtesy, and thanked her for her good opinion. Margaret felt uncomfortable. This was the first indication of the family spirit which had been afforded to her, and she did not like it. But Jessie gave her little time for regrets.

"Do you know," she cried gaily, turning to her; then, after a pause, she added with an arch look and smile, "but tell me first what I am to call you?"

"Margaret, if you please," was the smiling answer, for there was something peculiarly winning in Jessie's frank gaiety.

"Yes," said Jessie heedlessly, "Margaret is quite right for the cousin, but will it suit for the governess?"

A slight blush tinged Margaret's cheek, and both Rose and Anna exclaimed reprovingly—

"Oh, Jessie."

"I beg your pardon," she said instantly. "I did not mean that. I did not mean to be unkind or impertinent, I assure you. I did not think; as Rose says, I never do think. Pray do not be vexed, pray do forgive me, dear cousin Margaret;" and she put her arms caressingly round her neck, and looked pleadingly in her face.

"Indeed," Margaret answered frankly, "I have nothing to forgive. I am not at all ashamed of being your governess. I only blushed and felt awkward for one minute because I half fancied you intended to hint that I ought not to presume too much upon being your cousin, that I ought to remember that a governess is below her pupils in rank."

"No, no," protested Jessie warmly; and Anna, taking one of her hands with a gentle earnestness, said—

"Indeed, dear cousin Margaret, Jessie could not mean that. We are only afraid that we may forget too much that you are older than we, and that the first advances to intimacy ought to be from you. But you must never fancy that we think you our inferior."

"I will not, I do not," she replied in the same frank, unembarrassed manner. "As soon as Jessie began to speak again I saw what had been her real meaning, and I told you of the mistake I had at first made, only in order to account for the blush which I was conscious had been on my face."

"If Jessie would condescend to think for a minute before she speaks, she might make fewer mistakes herself, and less frequently cause others to make them," pronounced Rose.

Again Margaret looked uncomfortable; and in order to check the tart reply Jessie was ready to make, she hastily asked her to conclude the speech she had begun a few minutes before.

"Oh," she cried eagerly, "I was only going to ask

you if you knew that we were going to the country directly?"

Margaret knew, she said, that they were to live in the country, but she did not know when they were to go.

Rose explained that their town-house had been let to a family who wished to take possession as soon as possible, and they were therefore to leave town in about a fortnight.

"Well," said Margaret cheerfully, "the sooner the better, to my mind."

"Only," remarked Anna, "we should have liked to show you all the beauties of Edinburgh. And Mamma is vexed that your first coming among us should be made so uncomfortable by the bustle of packing up and preparing to go away."

"Oh," cried Jessie, "Mamma imagines that every one loves ease and quiet as much as she does. Her highest idea of happiness is, to be allowed to lie on the sofa all day, and to have nothing to do or to trouble herself about."

Margaret looked grave and pained. But neither of the older girls seemed to notice the disrespect of this speech, and Margaret did not feel inclined, at that early stage of their acquaintance, to express her disapproval.

Rose was anxious to warn Margaret against forming too high expectations of Auchenbeith. There was some fine scenery in the neighbourhood, she said, but Auchenbeith itself was tame and commonplace.

"Oh, the country is always pretty," said Margaret, smiling, "and Auchenbeith is a very pretty name."

"Nurse Crawford says it means 'the field of beeches,'" said Jessie.

"Well, then, we are always sure of fields and trees, and they are always green and beautiful."

"Always! Oh, Margaret. What, in winter?" said Jessie laughing.

"Not always green, but always beautiful," persisted Margaret, good-humouredly. "What can be more beautiful than trees and fields covered with white, dazzling snow?"

"But are not trees often left grim, and gaunt, and leafless, without even snow to hide their nakedness?"

"Yes, but even then they are beautiful, with their delicate tracery-work of branch and spray."

"Yes, yes," cried Anna eagerly, "Margaret is quite right. I have often seen that winter beauty in the trees. But, Rose, I think you hardly do justice to poor Auchenbeith. It has no romantic glens and rocks, perhaps, but the ground is so varied and undulating. There are, Margaret, so many, what we in Scotland call, heighs and hows, and such graceful clumps of trees, that I think every one must call it pretty. And those distant blue hills form such a fine background to every scene."

"Oh," said Rose, a little contemptuously, "every one knows how easily you are pleased Anna, and how ready you are to fancy beauty where none exists. But I must beg leave to adhere to my first opinion. The

house is handsome and convenient, there is an excellent garden, and a well laid out shrubbery, and that is all that can be said. But," she continued, with the manner of one who had quite closed the argument, of one whose judgment was conclusive in all cases, "Mamma charged us not to stay chattering and keep our cousin out of bed; and I am sure you look ready for it."

The elder girls bade her good-night, and left the room. Jessie followed them, but when she had reached the door she darted back again, and putting her arm round Margaret's waist, she looked up into her face with one of her winning looks, and asked—

"Do you know me too little to like to give me a kiss?" adding, when Margaret had smilingly granted the implied request, "I don't know what you may think of me, but I am quite sure I shall like you." And then kissing her again she ran out of the room.

Margaret herself did not know what she thought of Jessie or of her sisters. They had shown themselves in a very amiable light towards herself, and she felt sincerely grateful for their kindness and consideration, for their ardent anxiety to make her feel happy and comfortable. But then three times during that short conversation had she seen symptoms of a spirit of contention, of heedless indifference to giving each other pain, which both vexed and surprised her. She could not have believed that one sister could point out the faults of another in the hard, almost triumphant manner Rose had shown, or that a child could speak or

think so irreverently of her mother as Jessie had done.

She had at school learned to know and make allowance for the faults of girlhood, but not for faults of this nature. There was no opportunity for them there, no opportunity for breaking through those family ties, which Margaret felt to be such sacred things. As she thought of her own mother, with the tender love and reverence her memory always awakened, she almost shuddered to recall Jessie's light, heedless words and manner.

And yet Jessie was evidently not an unamiable girl. There was something very taking in her caressing way. But it was quite as evident that neither she nor Rose had ever taught themselves, had ever been taught by any one else to consider the claims that others had upon them, or the duties they owed to those around them.

And was it not now Margaret's duty to endeavour to teach them this? But how? She saw plainly enough that she should not have a shadow of authority over them, that she could only hope to benefit them by indirect instructions, by the influence she might acquire over their minds, either by means of her own example, or by means of the affection she might be able to inspire.

"But can I love them, so as to have the patience and forbearance necessary for such a work?" she asked herself. "Yes, I can, I *ought*, and my Father will

give me grace to do what I ought. A different life lies before me from that I had planned in my childish days, when love and devotedness to my own darling Arthur was to strengthen me for every task, and the joy of his constant companionship was to lighten every burden. How different, too, from the life I have been forming visions of during the last few months, when I fancied myself the governess of two or three young girls, who were to be entirely under my control, the system of whose education was to be wholly of my own devising. How interesting have I fancied it would be to study their minds and characters, and conform my instructions to what I should find written there."

And she half smiled as she contrasted the simple, teachable, earnest characters, of her imaginary pupils, with the dictatorial self-confident Rose, and the light, trifling Jessie.

"But," she continued, "how do I know what my difficulties might have been even with such characters? What do I know about the difficulties and trials, the pleasures and encouragements, which may be before me with my present pupils, and what have I to do with such speculations? My only concern is to seek to do earnestly and well the duty of the day and hour, and to leave the future to my loving heavenly Father. My present duty is to carry the burden of all my doubts and anxieties to that Saviour who has taught me to lay upon Him the infinitely heavier burden of

my sins, to tell Him all that now weighs upon my spirits, and to thank Him for all the great love and tenderness He has shown to me."

And kneeling, she in a spirit of simple, confiding, but exalted faith, poured forth the whole feelings of her heart to her Father in heaven, who had, in the words of Jacob, led her all her life long, and who had Himself taught her to pray and trust. Then after reading a few verses of His Blessed Word, she lay down to rest, and her sleep was as quiet and peaceful as any she had been used to enjoy in the days of uncaring, unthinking childhood.

But I daresay I ought to have given you a more full account of the position and circumstances of the family to whom I have so unceremoniously introduced you.

Mr. Cecil was by profession a Writer to the Signet. He had inherited from his father an excellent business, and a very good fortune, and had considerably increased both by his own industry. Within the last two years his already ample income had been enlarged by a handsome legacy bequeathed to Mrs. Cecil by an uncle; so that he might, and except for his son's sake probably would, have retired from business altogether. But Henry was his partner, and was too young and inexperienced to be left without his father's counsel and support. Mr. and Mrs. Cecil both preferred a country life, and had always planned that, when their girls' education should be finished, they would buy a

property, and live upon it during the greater part, if not the whole year.

The accomplishment of this plan had been hastened by the delicate state of Mrs. Cecil's health during the past winter, and by the opinion of the medical men that the pure air and greater quiet of the country, would prove her best medicine. On this account it had been necessary to provide a governess for the girls, and as we have seen, Mr. Cecil's benevolent desire to assist his young relative, led to her being chosen for the office.

Henry must of course remain in town during the greater part of the year, and Mr. Cecil proposed to come in for two or three days every week during session time; but a most comfortable home was provided for them in the house of Mrs. Campbell, an aunt of Mrs. Cecil's, who being a childless widow, was glad to have their society to enliven her quiet household, and who was so thoroughly beloved by all the young Cecils, as to remove every anxiety concerning Henry's comfort or happiness while under her roof.

On the Saturday morning when they were at breakfast, Mr. Cecil told Henry that he should release him from all office business for that day, in order that he might devote himself to the service of Margaret and the girls.

"You must see all you can to-day," he added, turning to Margaret, "for the labours of packing up must begin upon Monday in real earnest. And no light

labours will they be, as you may imagine, considering that we have been in this house for more than twenty years."

"No, indeed, they cannot be light," sighed Mrs. Cecil; "and I am quite vexed to think that Margaret should have so much bustle, and so many discomforts to bear, just upon her first coming among us."

"Oh," said Mr. Cecil cheerfully, "Margaret does not look like one who would be easily put about by bustle and discomfort. And I prophesy that she will all the sooner feel herself at home, and you will all the sooner learn to look upon one another as old friends, on account of the annoyances and fatigues you must bear in common."

Margaret laughingly confirmed his opinion that she rather liked a bustle occasionally. And she added modestly, but earnestly—

"I hope, Mrs. Cecil, you will not wait for the end of our labours before you count me as an old friend. I hope you will have no scruple in making me useful, but will command my services as freely as those of your own girls. I pride myself upon being a good packer and a good contriver. I flatter myself you will find me a useful assistant."

And a most useful, a most agreeable assistant she proved. She was so active and obliging, so clever in devising expedients to meet every emergency, so quick in executing them. She was always good-humoured and self-possessed, never flurried or annoyed by any

little mischance, but, as the saying is, kept all her wits about her, and was always ready for action. Long before the week was over, she had established herself high in the favour of every member of the household, and the girls had learned to think that they could do nothing without her.

By the end of the week all preliminary arrangements were completed, and on the Monday the flitting commenced in real earnest. Auchenbeith was fully eighteen miles distant, so that the conveyance of all the goods and chattels there was no very short or easy business. It was, however, all successfully accomplished, and by the Saturday evening they were established in tolerable comfort in their new home.

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST DAYS AT AUCHENBEITH.

Even the sensible, regular Rose, thought that Monday and Tuesday should be given up to rest, and to exploring the beauties of Auchenbeith. But upon Wednesday morning, she and Anna declared that they were quite tired of idleness, and were determined to begin their lessons again that very day. Jessie laughed them to scorn, announced her determination not to open a book for at least a week, and said that of her own free will, she should not learn a lesson for a month to come.

"But you must all the time be learning one against your will," said Margaret archly.

"Learning a lesson against my will! What do you mean? What lesson shall I learn against my will?"

"The miseries of idleness," was the laughing answer.

"Oh, if I may be idle until I have learned that, your office of governess will be a sinecure as far as I am concerned. And you are a stupid set of creatures to go up to the schoolroom, to dusty, tiresome books, when such a glorious sky, and such bright green fields, are calling upon you to come out and enjoy them.

Coming, coming, dear friends! you shall not call upon me in vain." And so saying, and humming the burden of an old hunting song, she stepped lightly out of the window which opened upon the lawn, and was soon out of sight.

"We may not be able to do much to-day," said Rose, as they went up to the schoolroom, "but we can at least settle our plans a little, and so be ready to begin in earnest to-morrow."

And in a few minutes the table was covered with books—French, Italian, German, and English, and Rose was busy displaying her acquirements, and explaining her plans for regular systematic study. To some of these plans Margaret gave a cordial approval, but to others she listened in silence, and did not attempt to interfere. While Rose marked down the different hours she intended to devote to different things, Margaret was meditating whether she ought to give her opinion and advice, or leave Rose to find out her own mistakes by experience. With many girls the last would probably be the wisest plan, but could Rose ever learn to see that *she* had been mistaken?

Rose described with great self-satisfaction a plan which she intended to adopt of keeping a diary in which to note down everything interesting and important that she had read through the day, and she asked Margaret if she did not approve of the plan.

"Yes," she replied with emphasis, "I approve of *that* plan, more particularly if you also add a few

remarks of your own; it will accustom you to reflect upon what you read."

"And do you not approve of *all* our plans?" Rose asked in some surprise, so confident was she of her own wisdom.

"No," Margaret answered frankly, "I think you are undertaking too many things at once. French, Italian, and German! why, one language is quite enough at a time. Is it not?"

"But then we wish so much to learn German. We have begun it, and like it so much. We should not like to leave it."

"Take it up alone then for the present. You can easily learn French and Italian, after you have gone as far as you wish in German."

"Learn French!" interrupted Rose in an offended tone. "I should hope that is unnecessary in my case at least. I should hope I know it pretty well already, considering for how many years I have been the dux of Monsieur Gambier's class."

"If by 'pretty well,' you mean quite well enough," said Margaret quietly, "why spend any more time upon it? I see in your plan an hour every day devoted to French; will not that be a lost hour, if you are already a sufficiently good French scholar?"

"But if I neglect it altogether, may I not lose what I have learned?"

"Translating from French to English is such a simple affair, that I think any one can keep up the

power of doing so merely by reading such books as come in one's way. And you can, if you like, exercise yourself in writing it, by making your entries and remarks in your note-book in French instead of English."

Rose felt that her boasted knowledge of French was scarcely sufficient for such a task! but she could not bring herself to acknowledge it. Anna was more ingenuous. She said at once she could not write French easily enough to do that, but added that she could read it quite easily, and that she did not care to do more.

"Well," said Margaret, "that comes much to the same thing. If you know as much of French as you wish, or think it useful to know, I do not see why you should spend more time upon it."

"One ought to know everything thoroughly," Rose pronounced sententiously.

"What, everything?" Margaret asked laughing. "Oh, Rose, impossible. Remember how many studies we have been proposing to pursue with Mr. Cecil's help,—Geology, Mineralogy, Botany, and Zoology. How can we ever know all these things thoroughly?"

"But surely," said Rose, "one ought never to be contented with a merely superficial knowledge of these things? You said yourself, that you could never be satisfied with purely popular elementary books."

"No, I should not. I should like to understand fully all I know. In Geology, for instance, I should not be satisfied to stop short of a clear, distinct knowledge of all the general facts and principles, and I should like

also to understand the different theories, so far as to be able to form an opinion of my own upon them. But having got that, I do not see why I may not then turn my attention to the Vegetable Physiology and Botany, which will interest me in the flowers and plants around me; to the Astronomy or Chemistry, which will enable me to understand so many of the things which every day excite my wonder and curiosity. I do not see why I should force myself to learn all the minute details which it may be necessary for a Professor of Geology to know, but in which I feel no interest, and for which I have no use."

"But," asked Anna, "how are we to fix the limits within which we ought not to be satisfied?"

"These limits must be a good deal fixed by our position and circumstances. Were I living in a place very favourable for geological observation, I should certainly desire to go farther into details than I feel inclined to do here, where there are few advantages of the kind. And if I had a great deal of time at my own disposal, I should like to pursue one science alone, perhaps astronomy, as it takes my fancy most; and I should feel inclined to persevere in it, until I had learned all I could learn. But in our present circumstances, I certainly do wish for a clear knowledge of the general facts of a good many sciences, before I can resign myself altogether to any one."

"But to go back to French and Italian, what limits do you fix in such things?"

"Again I say, circumstances must determine. I have a decided turn for learning languages. In the prospect of being a governess, it was necessary that my knowledge of all I might have to teach should be very considerable; and I have therefore gone on with each language I have taken up, until I could read, speak, and write it as well as English. But if you have no such decided turn, and if there be no valid reason why you should aim at more than to read the language easily, having attained that, I do not see why you should force yourself to spend more time upon it."

Rose's self-conceit was a good deal wounded by the style of these remarks. She was mortified by Margaret's indifference to, or rather unconsciousness of, her own claims to admiration, and by the simple matter-of-fact manner in which she spoke of attainments so greatly superior to those upon which she prided herself. Rose's only aim in pursuing any study, was the credit which her proficiency in it would give her; and she could not bear the tacit reproach of such an aim implied in Margaret's words. She said somewhat impatiently,—

"Still I think, Margaret, your ideas are very lax and very strange. Every one says we ought to accomplish fully all we undertake."

"Most certainly we should. In my geological or botanical studies, I ought not to allow any difficulty or any dryness to discourage me, any love of novelty

to distract me from persevering until I have acquired that full, clear knowledge of general principles which I aim at acquiring. I ought certainly to guard against being satisfied with vague, indistinct ideas, with an imperfect understanding of what I have tried to learn. And if Anna has not yet attained her object, if she cannot read French with perfect ease, I think she ought to go on steadily with the study of French until she can. Only I advise her to give *all* her language time and language powers to it, and to leave German for the present."

"But, Margaret, there is an objection you have not thought of to your theory," said Anna. "In the excitement and pleasure of beginning a new study, I may fix upon a much greater proficiency as my end than I may think either necessary or advisable afterwards, when I am getting wearied of it, and disinclined to go any farther."

"Oh, but you must resolve to adhere to the sentence your judgment pronounced while it was quite unbiassed, and could clearly see the merits of the case. You must not listen to its representations when disinclination or weariedness has put out one or both of its eyes."

"And where lie the eyes of my judgment?" asked Anna laughing. "How can I get at them to rub them when they get sleepy or dim?"

Margaret joined good-humouredly in the laugh, but she added more seriously—

"Besides, Anna, if you give up each language as

soon as you find it difficult or uninteresting, you will lose one, I may say the greatest, benefit the learning of languages can give you."

"And what is that?"

"The disciplining of your mind, the acquirement of habits of patient perseverance and diligence even in uninteresting work."

"Certainly," said Rose confidently. "The greatest benefit we derive from learning a language is the knowledge of that language; and the benefit is greater or less in proportion to its amount."

"No, Rose, I cannot agree with you. It is only a *may-be* our having in our after-life occasion to use the knowledge we in our youth acquire of French, Italian, or German. But we *must* find the habits I speak of useful every day."

"Then, Margaret," asked Anna smiling, "you will perhaps be as willing to set your pupil to any kind of tiresome, uninteresting work, as to learning languages? I could fancy she might learn perseverance as well in making shirts, as in going through so many pages of the French grammar."

"Perhaps so. But in going through these pages she will be gaining other advantages which her shirt-making could not give her. Her memory will be strengthened, her powers of comparison and reflection quickened, while she applies her grammar rules, or endeavours to find out the meaning of a passage in her translation; but they might lie almost, if not altogether dormant,

while she runs up the seams or stitches the wrist-bands of her shirt."

"Oh," cried Rose impatiently, "if you and Anna get upon the powers of comparison and reflection, and all those questions about the mental powers, which you and Papa are so fond of discussing, we shall never have done, and it will be luncheon time before we have finished arranging our plans of lessons."

"But should we not arrange these plans to better purpose if we understood a little of the wants of our own mental powers, and of the best way of remedying them?" suggested Anna a little timidly, for she was not accustomed to oppose Rose.

"I never heard before," Rose answered contemptuously, "that one needed the aid of mental philosophy to decide whether one ought to learn German on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, or on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and to find out how long one ought to practise music and drawing; and these are the questions I now wish to settle."

Anna was silenced though not convinced, and Margaret did not interfere. She had discernment enough to see that Rose was unwilling to acknowledge that there might be important questions connected with even her ordinary school lessons which she had never once thought of. She wished her to give up the habit of learning this or that merely because others did so; she wished her to reflect upon what ought to be the great aim of even the schoolroom part of her education. But she had learnt

that Rose did not like to be taught; she believed that her own good sense would lead her to reflect upon what had already passed if it were not disagreeably forced upon her attention, and she had long ere this learned when to be silent, as well as when to be frank and bold, in the expression of her opinions.

"Well, busy and sensible ladies, I hope you have derived much profit and pleasure from your morning's employment," was Jessie's salutation when they met at luncheon.

"You seem at any rate to have derived much weariedness from yours," retorted Rose. "You do not look as if you would be very able to accompany Margaret and me in our search for the original Auchenbeith, as you proposed."

"Oh," said Jessie, trying to hide a little embarrassment, "I have changed my mind. I prefer going out with Mamma and Anna in the carriage."

"You might as well confess the truth at once," said Rose contemptuously. "You have too often declared your preference for walking over driving to deceive us now. You are too tired to go; that is the real state of the case."

"Well, my love, and if it be," said Mrs. Cecil gently, "it does not signify. Do not tease Jessie. Anna and I shall like to have her with us, she amuses us with her gay talk."

"Indeed, Mamma, I do not like Jessie in a carriage. She is so restless, she——," but here Anna checked

herself with a deep blush and a slight glance at Margaret.

Anna was the most considerate of the sisters. Her love for Margaret had taught her to watch her countenance that she might find out how best to give her pleasure. She had often read there the surprise and pain which Rose and Jessie's quarrels awakened. This had opened her own eyes to much that was wrong in her own intercourse with her sisters, and she had lately frequently checked herself when about to make one of her fretful complaints.

Jessie turned to her with one of her looks of gay impertinence, and begged her to continue her pleasing and flattering remarks; but Anna remained determinately silent, and Margaret hastened to turn the conversation by asking Rose if she were sure she knew the way to the spot they meant to visit.

Rose was quite confident in her own knowledge, and proposed that they should set out immediately, as the walk was a long one. They were going in search of a pretty glen Mr. Cecil had described to them, in one part of which were some very fine old beech-trees, round the margin of a beautiful spring. The whole glen had once been thickly wooded with beeches, and Mr. Cecil had heard that the name of the property had been derived from it.

Their walk led them through some pretty grass fields, and down a quiet sequestered lane, with a broad margin of grass, and high unclipped hedges, giving promise

of a profusion of hawthorn and wild roses. Margaret enjoyed every feature of the country scene, and Rose was pleased with the novelty of this solitary, picturesque looking lane, so different from anything she had been used to in the small country places in the immediate neighbourhood of Edinburgh, where they had hitherto passed their summers.

"How beautiful this must be when the hawthorn is in flower!" exclaimed Margaret. "We must come here often, Rose."

Rose assented, but her tone and manner were much more staid and sober than Margaret's. After a little, the lane led down the face of a considerable slope, affording them a pretty wide view over the surrounding country, with the background of the distant range of hills which Anna so much admired.

"Well, Rose," said Margaret, with much animation, "I must say I agree with Anna. You certainly did underrate Auchenbeith. It is a very pretty place. One might indeed see finer, more sublime scenery than this; but what can be prettier than these half wild fields, with their sunny slopes of bright green grass, their patches of golden whin and broom, their detached rows and clumps of trees, and their high hedges?"

"But such straggling, ill-kept trees and hedges!"

"But such picturesque trees and hedges!" persisted Margaret playfully, mimicking Rose's manner. After a pause, she added in a tone of excited feeling—"There is such a happy, home-speaking look in a scene like

this, it seems to go straight to my heart, and to soften and cheer it at the same moment. It seems to speak of bright, joyous sunrisings, of calm, lovely sunsets; and is in some way associated in my mind with gay, mirthful childhood, and a fresh-hearted, peaceful old age."

"What strange fancies you have, Margaret," said Rose, almost impatiently. "I have heard many comparisons before, but never one like yours. What possible likeness can there be between grass fields and either childhood or old age? And how can they both be like the same thing?"

Margaret had almost unconsciously spoken her thoughts aloud. She felt at once chilled by this remark. There was something to her very repulsive in Rose's harsh matter-of-fact manner, and she answered somewhat coldly—

"I did not say they were like. Only the two ideas are associated together in my mind."

Rose was too self-satisfied to remark Margaret's coldness, and went on in her own consequential tone.

"Those who had never seen anything better, might perhaps admire tame scenery like this; but I have travelled through the most beautiful parts of Scotland, and can see no beauty here."

"And I," said Margaret, smiling, "was born amid the sublime scenery at the foot of the Pyrenees, have lived in the rich, luxuriant Devonshire, in the romantic neighbourhood of Matlock, and have visited all the Cumberland lakes, and yet I see much beauty here."

Rose gave her a glance, and smile of slight incredulity tinged with a kind of scornful compassion.

"Well," she said, "I know Anna fancies she can see beauty in the most commonplace objects, but I did give you credit for a better taste."

"To be easily pleased is a great requisite in the art of enjoying one's-self, is it not?"

"Perhaps so. But I should think that to fall into raptures over every little common object, was also a good requisite for being despised by all sensible people."

"I hope," was Margaret's quiet answer, "that I should never fall into raptures, as you call it, foolishly or unseasonably. But as for your sensible people, I am contented with my enjoyment, and do not envy them their contempt."

Rose did not answer; a disagreeable consciousness stole over her mind that Margaret did certainly enjoy life more than she did; and yet Margaret was, as certainly, quite as sensible and quite as clever as she was. Such reflections were not agreeable, and she hastened to banish them by remarking, that Jessie would be sorry she had not come with them, when she heard what a pleasant walk they had had. And she added some very bitter remarks upon poor Jessie's silly trifling, and extreme thoughtlessness.

"A want of thought in fatiguing herself so much this forenoon, has done harm to no one but herself," said Margaret gently.

"But that is seldom the case, and it would have

been quite the same to her if she had injured us all most deeply," was Rose's warm rejoinder. And she launched forth into the most cutting censure of her sister's character, detailing all her faults with scrupulous minuteness, and seeming even to find a pleasure in doing so.

Margaret listened for some time in silence. She had ceased to be surprised at the want of sisterly feeling among her pupils, but she had not ceased to be most deeply pained by it; and it was her daily prayer that wisdom, patience, and love might be given her, to deal with this grievous fault aright, and that a blessing might accompany her endeavours to open the eyes of the sisters to its sinfulness. Earnestly did she now offer up this prayer as she listened to Rose, and when she appeared to have exhausted her subject or her indignation, she gravely and emphatically asked her—"What use she proposed to make of the knowledge she had taken so much pains to acquire?"

"Use, knowledge!" repeated Rose, "I don't understand you. What use, what knowledge are you speaking of?"

"I do not imagine you can have taken so much trouble to become acquainted with your sister's faults, without having some good reason for it, and I meant to ask what that reason was?"

Rose answered somewhat angrily, "that she had taken no pains to become acquainted with Jessie's faults; they were so palpable she could not help seeing them."

"Ah, Rose," said Margaret gently, but earnestly,

"have you ever tried to help it? Or, are you not sometimes conscious of a slight feeling of pleasure when you can detect and proclaim them?"

"A feeling of pleasure in my sister's faults!" repeated Rose with increasing indignation. "What do you mean, Margaret? Even if you give me no credit for good feeling, which might make my sister's defects painful to me, you must at least have seen how much inconvenience and discomfort they cause me?"

"I did not say you took pleasure in her faults," said Margaret in the same gentle manner, "but in detecting and proclaiming them. I am sorry if I have wronged you in this, but I cannot with truth say that I have not sometimes thought it. And as your sincere friend, I would earnestly advise you to ask your conscience the question, solemnly and seriously, and to endeavour to answer it to yourself, as in the sight of the Lord who searcheth the heart."

Again Rose was silent. Margaret did not feel sure whether the silence arose from self-conviction or from anger. She anxiously asked herself whether she had not spoken too harshly, whether she ought not to have been more cautious with a girl of Rose's self-satisfied character. When Rose spoke again, it was to ask Margaret in a milder tone, what use she meant to imply she ought to make of her knowledge of Jessie's faults. Margaret's heart was relieved by the question. Rose's voluntarily recurring to the subject, showed that she was not angry; and although Margaret might

not, so far as she was herself concerned, have cared very much whether Rose were offended with her or not, yet she knew that to make her angry was not a likely way to do her good; and as her heart was much set upon discharging her new duties to the best of her power, upon making herself as useful to her pupils as she could, she was glad to find that her plain speaking had not given the offence she had feared; and she answered gaily—

"Oh, a sensible girl like you can find that out for yourself. You might use it for the purpose of helping Jessie to resist these natural defects. It ought to assist you to find excuses for the injuries which they inflict upon you, and to strengthen you to bear them with patience."

"I don't see that," said Rose quickly. "The more I think of her great thoughtlessness, the more provoked do I feel at the mischief she does, because I feel the more afraid of her doing the like again and again."

"That is because you look on her faults only in the light of the harm they do you. If you consider how sad it is, that she, your own sister, should so often do what is wrong, what is sin in God's sight, a sister's love will make you mourn over her sinfulness, and lead you earnestly to seek to help her to do better—a sister's love will make you anxious and glad to find any excuse in the natural tendency of her disposition."

"I do not think of that," said Rose gravely, "I suspect ——," she was going to say, "that I have

scarcely enough of sister's love," but her checked herself. The acknowledgment was too humiliating.

"We ought to think of it though, dear Rose," said Margaret kindly. "In walking arm and arm with lame persons, compassion for their infirmity keeps us from fretting at the discomfort we experience from their uneven walk, and we should think ourselves shockingly cruel and selfish if it did not. But we forget that mental infirmities ought also to awaken our deep compassion, and our earnest endeavours to succour those who labour under them."

"Only there is sin in them too, and that should awaken our indignation, should it not?" asked Rose doubtfully.

"Ah, Rose, what are we, that we should feel indignation at the sin of others, so full of sin as we are ourselves! We may, and ought, to feel deep sorrow because they are offending our loving heavenly Father; but if we really love the offender, will not that sorrow quite swallow up indignation?"

Again Rose's conscience reminded her that she had never felt such sorrow, but she did not like its admonitions, and gladly seized an opportunity to break off the conversation.

They had now reached the bottom of the lane, across which there ran a little burn. Rose knew that their path lay either up or down this burn, but she could not at all remember which, and Margaret had not heard Mr. Cecil's directions. Margaret thought she had, from

the top of the hill, seen a glen something like the one described, farther up the burn, but Rose was pretty sure she had seen one farther down.

While they were standing discussing this affair, they heard the sound of horses' feet approaching, and presently a young lady on horseback, followed by her groom, made her appearance. She appeared to be about Rose's age, and was altogether rather a distinguished looking person. She rode a very beautiful, spirited horse, and rode remarkably well. Her riding-habit and hat were handsome, fitted well, and became her slight figure, and very pretty fair face. As she passed them, a slight interchange of civilities took place. The lane was at this part very muddy, and she checked her horse's canter to a walk, that she might not splash the two foot-passengers. Rose seeing that the horse did not much admire her parasol, hastily closed it, and the young lady made her the most graceful bow imaginable, and thanked her with what Margaret thought an exaggerated air of courteous gratitude; but Rose was quite charmed.

"What a beautiful girl!" she cried, when the fair horsewoman was out of hearing. "And how well she rides. She must be Miss Percival, daughter of Sir Edward Percival of Saintsel."

"Must be! because she is beautiful, and rides so well?" asked Margaret archly.

"No, I don't mean that, Margaret," said Rose a little pettishly. "But Dr. Stewart told Mamma, that

Miss Percival and Miss M'Leod were the only young ladies in the neighbourhood; and she cannot be Miss M'Leod."

"Have you seen Miss M'Leod, then?"

"No. Mrs. M'Leod was a great friend of Mamma's when they were both young, but we girls have never seen either her or her daughter. While Colonel M'Leod was in service, they were abroad with him, and since they have come to live here, he has been in such bad health, that they have never liked to leave home. We have invited them often, and they have invited us, but something has always occurred to prevent our accepting the invitations. Papa and Mamma spent a night at the cottage, when they came out to look at Auchenbeith, but none of us were with them."

"How can you be so sure, then, that this young lady may not be Miss M'Leod?"

"Because I have heard our boys describe her. The young M'Leods are at the same school with our boys, and Hugh and John spend a part of every vacation at the cottage. No, that cannot be Hester M'Leod. How graceful and elegant she looked, and what a pleasant voice and smile she had!"

"From whence I infer that Hester M'Leod is neither graceful nor elegant, and has not a pleasant voice nor smile," said Margaret laughing.

"Oh, I don't know anything about it," Rose replied sharply. "Only she has dark eyes and hair, and that young lady was dazzlingly fair."

Margaret saw that for some reason the thought of Hester M'Leod was not agreeable to Rose, and she pursued the conversation no farther. Upon consulting their watches, they found that their walk had consumed so much time already, that they must return home at once, without making any farther effort to find the field of beeches. Rose, during their walk home, several times alluded with great pleasure to her encounter with Miss Percival, and narrated the occurrence with triumphant satisfaction to her sisters as soon as they returned. Margaret could not help perceiving that Rose's pleasure was heightened by the fact, that Anna and Jessie had not shared it with her. The triumph of having been the only one to meet this new acquaintance, was one great ingredient in the satisfaction with which she reflected upon the meeting.

When Margaret was alone in her room that night, her thoughts recurred sadly to this, among other little characteristics of her pupils which had been brought before her through the day. She felt thoroughly dispirited as she recalled them. Her heart shrunk from the companionship to which she seemed bound. How uncongenial to her taste and habits were the giddy, frivolous Jessie, the fretful Anna, and the self-satisfied, narrow-minded Rose. How ill did they bear the comparison she drew between them, and her earnest warm-hearted Norah, her gifted, amiable Arthur. What intercourse could she have with them? How could they understand or share in her thoughts and feelings?

Never since her first six months at school had she felt so utterly friendless and companionless. And even then the pain was less felt; her time was so constantly filled up with occupations quite independent of her companions. But here the very nature of her work must bring her constantly into contact with those defects and failings she so much disliked and condemned.

It was true that her uncle had not been a companion quite to her taste; but the time she had spent at Cecil Abbey had been most delightfully diversified with long and frequent visits from Arthur. Besides, Sir William's sufferings from ill health, his total dependence upon her for comfort, and his very great affection for her, had inspired her with a kind of grateful, loving pity, which made her totally forget his want of congeniality, in the constant desire to be of use to him, and to relieve and cheer him.

But at Auchenbeith there was no outward or visible sorrow to arouse her compassion, there seemed no prospect of usefulness before her.

She looked round with a feeling of bitterness upon the comforts and luxuries of her pretty room, and thought how gladly she would change them all for the meanest abode she could imagine, so that she might but have a friend, a companion in that abode with her. How willingly would she exchange her present sphere of duty, for the hardest, the most painful, most wearisome kind of labour, might she but have one dear one,

for whose sake that labour was required, and whose love and sympathy could sweeten it all.

"O Arthur, my own Arthur," she said half aloud, "for you, and with you, I could bear all, do all. But here, what can I, what am I to do?"

As she spoke, Norah's oft-repeated words—"I am to do what I can," flashed through her mind, and recalled her at once to a better spirit. She covered her face with her hands, burning blushes rose to her cheeks, bitter shame and sorrow filled her heart as she reflected upon the morbid, discontented frame of mind she had been indulging.

"Who placed me here? Who gave me my work? Who stands at my right hand to work with me?" were three questions Norah had advised her often to ask herself; and as she now put them solemnly to her heart, she prayed earnestly for pardon for her ungrateful murmuring, and for grace to remember them henceforward more constantly and more realizingly.

She set herself steadily to recall each train of thought that had passed through her mind during the last hour, and to note the peculiar sinfulness of each. As she proceeded, she was shocked at the self-exalting, uncharitable spirit of her judgments upon the young Cecils' characters, at the determination she had felt to look down upon them as her inferiors, and not to see any redeeming points. That there were such points she now gratefully acknowledged, and she endeavoured to recollect each little hopeful trait; such as Anna's

checking herself in her fretful complaint, or Rose's unexpected softening under her reproofs; and she thanked her God for each one, as a promise and encouragement to her exertions.

But what filled her with most penitential sorrow was the recollection of her self-willed murmuring against God's appointments.

"I fancy I could bear trial and suffering so nobly, that I could make such extraordinary sacrifices and exertions for the sake of my darling brother, and I have forgotten that my present little sorrows must be borne, my present slight sacrifices of inclination must be made, for the sake of One who is more than brother, father, or mother to me, and who is ever by my side to sustain and help me. Ah, dear Mamma, you had much need to remind me that I must learn to work, and to bear for my Lord's sake, and not merely for the sake of an earthly idol."

It was very late that night before Margaret retired to bed. It was an eventful night to her. Long after every one else had retired, she sat there in her quiet room recalling each incident of her life, blessing God for all the way by which He had led her, and seeking from Him grace and strength for what might be to come. She was this night greatly humbled in her own eyes, but from that humility the Holy Spirit caused to spring an earnest, prayerful watchfulness, which proved her greatest strength.

CHAPTER V.

JESSIE.

About twelve o'clock on the following day, Jessie sauntered into the schoolroom.

"Tired of your own sweet company and of idleness?" asked Rose ironically.

"No, neither tired of my own company, nor desirous of yours, my gentle and amiable sister. I came to give Anna a piece of information I knew she would like to hear. As for you, you are too philosophically indifferent to everything to care about it, even though it is connected with your fair prodigy on horseback."

Rose was engaged in removing some books from the table to the bookcase, and she went on piling one above the other, bestowing scrupulous attention upon placing the largest underneath, and appearing not to hear, or take any interest in what Jessie said; but Anna eagerly asked what information she had to give about Miss Percival.

"About Miss Percival! None that I know of," said Jessie, glancing mischievously at Rose. "But as I have persuaded Mamma to go and call at Saintsel and the

cottage this afternoon, we shall then perhaps find out whether the fair and interesting unknown be really Miss Percival or not."

"But the Percivals have not called here," said Anna.

"Oh yes, they have. They called upon Monday when we were all out. Think of Mamma never telling us until to-day when I happened to say I wished they had called. I never saw any one like Mamma, she takes no interest in anything. By the bye, Rose, she is certainly more philosophical than you; you were a leetle, leetle bit enraptured about your lovely stranger yesterday."

Margaret looked up reprovingly at Jessie's irreverent mention of her mother. Jessie saw the glance and understood it, but she only laughed, saying lightly—

"Now, Margaret, don't preach me a sermon upon respect to parents, for I know it all already; only I never can remember in time. But what are you industrious ladies going to do just now? I want a little occupation that I may not weary for two o'clock."

Anna said they were going to draw.

"Oh, then, I shall draw too. I want so much to be able to draw such a number of things; and I want so much to see Margaret's portfolio. So my dear, good Margaret, lay aside those grave, governess looks for another time, and bring it out that we may fix upon the style we are going to begin to. You know you told me in your own honest, straightforward way, that you had a great talent for drawing; so I expect to see wonders."

In spite of herself, Margaret could not help smiling at Jessie's half-coaxing, half-saucy manner. She agreed to bring down the portfolio, but warned Jessie that she had very few highly-finished drawings.

"Oh, but do let us see what you have got, your sketches, and everything," cried both Rose and Anna.

Margaret and Jessie carried down the portfolio, and the other two gathered round to see the beauties it was to disclose. Greatly as their expectations had been raised, they were fully satisfied. There were three or four highly-finished drawings, copies she had made of some fine old paintings at Cecil Abbey. But beautifully executed as these were, the girls scarcely admired them so much as they did her water-coloured landscapes, and a great variety of spirited sketches of children, old men and women, cats, dogs, horses, and donkeys. Their great difficulty was to decide among so many various styles, which they should choose to pursue.

In the middle of the portfolio there was a smaller one which Margaret quietly removed without opening it. The girls supposed that it perhaps contained some particular beauties, and expected that she would show them its contents after they had inspected the others. But she did not. When they had seen the last sketch, she laughingly advised them to make their choice quickly as the drawing hour would soon be over. And she proceeded to point out to each the copy she thought they ought to begin with, without making any allusion to the mysterious portfolio which she still held in her hand.

"I think I should like to try this group of ragged children teasing that patient looking donkey," said Anna; "I have had some lessons in figures, and like them very much."

And Rose chose a water-coloured landscape. Both felt curious about the little portfolio, but were too considerate to ask any question; Jessie was less scrupulous.

"I shall not choose until I have seen all your treasures," she cried, pointing to the portfolio.

Margaret's colour rose. She looked embarrassed and distressed; and Anna, who was watching her closely, even fancied she saw tears in her eyes. Before either of the sisters could interfere to check Jessie's forwardness, she had recovered her composure, and putting the object of the latter's curiosity into her hand, said calmly, though sadly—

"I had not intended to show you these, but you may look at them if you have any desire to do so. They are merely a few rude sketches of my early home, done when I was a child, a likeness of my brother, and one or two other memorials of—of—my early life." And in spite of all her efforts, her voice faltered and the tears arose fast. She turned away to hide them. Jessie looked sorry and ashamed; Rose drew herself up, and prepared to pronounce a dignified rebuke upon the impropriety of indulging idle curiosity. But Anna's affectionate consideration for Margaret's feelings made her the first to speak.

"No, Jessie, don't open it. I am sure you don't

want to see them now. Take it back, dear Margaret, and forget poor Jessie's heedlessness. She did not mean to vex you. Take it back, and put it away."

"No, no," said Margaret, trying to smile and speak in her usual manner, "I have awakened Jessie's curiosity, and must satisfy it. Open it if you like, Jessie, you will not vex me by doing so."

Jessie waited no second bidding. The others almost involuntarily drew nearer to gaze also. Margaret stood a little apart, looking on with a quiet sadness. As she had said, they were almost all very rude sketches of the old chateau and of Philippe's cottage. The girls laughed at the childish imperfections they exhibited. But how speaking were they to Margaret, how suggestive of old memories and old feelings! They recalled not only the scenes they were intended to represent, but also the circumstances when each sketch had been made. One quite startled her by the vividness with which it brought before her all the little occurrences connected with it.

She had made it about two years before her mother's death. Mrs. Cecil had been unwell, and had been for two or three weeks confined to her own room. One bright forenoon, she had expressed to Margaret her impatience of her confinement, her desire to change the view upon which she had so long looked out, saying laughingly, that she would give a great deal for a glimpse of Norah's cottage.

Margaret understood her words literally; she took the first opportunity of running down to the cottage,

and spent, what then seemed to her a very long time in endeavouring to make an extra good drawing.

How well she remembered it all! As Jessie was going to lay aside this sketch for another, she took it from her, and gazed upon it with a melancholy pleasure. She seemed to be again finding it "*so* difficult" to draw the half open door, to catch the slope of the hen-house; seemed to be again teased with the wind blowing up her paper; seemed again to see her mother's look of affectionate pride, when she presented her little offering; seemed again to hear her low, gentle voice, thanking her for the trouble she had taken. The present scene was all forgotten, and she started violently when aroused by Jessie's calling upon her to explain a drawing she held in her hand.

This drawing was better executed than the others, but it seemed a copy from some old and very uncouth picture. It represented a man endeavouring to make his way up a steep and narrow footpath. A terrible precipice lay on one hand, a rugged high cliff overhung the road upon the other; while behind, before, were strange wild-looking monsters, evidently bent on opposing his progress. The man was the best part of the picture. His face, his figure, his whole attitude expressed so strongly a calm, firm determination to conquer. In one hand he held a thick, knotted club, and on the club were written in old characters the words, "I can, because I ought."

Margaret explained that this was a copy she had

made, during her last visit to France, of an old picture belonging to her mother's foster-sister. Norah did not know its early history, but it had been in the possession of her mother's family for many generations. When Norah left Ireland to join her foster-sister, her mother gave her the picture in order that she might remember and act upon the motto, which had always been a great favourite with her.

"I like the motto," cried Jessie eagerly; "I shall take it for mine."

"I am glad to hear it," remarked Rose, perhaps it may teach you to give up your absurd, childish excuse for every fault—'I really could not help it.'"

"I *ought* to make a courtesy for such a flattering speech," said Jessie, with a comical look of pretended submission, "and I *can*, because I *ought*. So here it is."

"Ah, Jessie," said Margaret kindly and earnestly, "I have often heard that saying used for good and noble purposes, but I never heard it misused before as you are doing now. I shall some day tell you a story about that motto, and what it strengthened my loving nurse to do."

"A story—oh, yes! Now, now, Margaret, tell it now, like a dear, good, excellent Margaret."

And she tried to throw her arms round Margaret's neck, and to employ her usual battery of coaxing and kisses. But Margaret laughingly held her off, and told her that she should most certainly not tell her then.

"Rose and Anna are going to be busy, and I am

going to read to them; you are at liberty to stay out of our schoolroom as long as you please, but you are not at liberty to disturb us when you come. You must either go away, or be busy and quiet too."

Jessie understood Margaret's character well enough to know that remonstrance or entreaties were useless, and with a mock gesture of melancholy resignation, she too sat down to draw.

Anna had asked Margaret to read them an account of the wasps' nest, out of a book upon insect architecture, and for some time the quiet of the schoolroom was only broken by the reader's voice, interrupted occasionally by Jessie's exclamations about having broken the point of her charcoal, having lost her knife, and suchlike complaints.

When Margaret went to inspect her pupils' progress, she found that Anna showed considerable talent for drawing. Her taste was good, her eye correct, and in some parts her touch spirited and decided. Other parts, however, were feebly and carelessly executed.

"Come, come," said Margaret cheerily, "you must put more life and spirit into your drawing, Anna. You can draw remarkably well, and you must not allow a single bad or feeble stroke to be seen. You must arouse yourself out of a sleepy frame, and give your mind and will to do it *all* perfectly."

The inspiriting tone in which this was said seemed to have its effect upon Anna; she resumed her pencil with unusual animation.

Rose's style was very different. Every line was copied with the most scrupulous exactitude, but the effect of the whole was stiff, formal, and unpleasing. Margaret despaired of being able to improve her; she was so perfectly satisfied with her own performance. Comfortably wrapped up in the consciousness that she had copied every part with the utmost faithfulness, she could not be made to see that her drawing was wholly devoid of life or spirit, she could not be made to feel that more than faithful copying was necessary, that one ought to understand and enter into the feeling and expression of the drawing one wished to copy.

But how shall I describe what a temper-trying pupil Jessie was? She could have drawn almost as well as Anna had she chosen, but her carelessness and inattention were wellnigh incredible. She was copying a large head. She had nearly finished the charcoal outline; the upper part was very good, but the mouth was almost twice too far distant from the nose, and about twice as large as it should have been. She at once, and laughingly acknowledged her errors, when Margaret pointed them out, and taking her feather, hastily brushed out nearly the whole face.

"My dear Jessie," remonstrated Margaret, "the nose, eyes, and forehead were very good, why rub them out?"

"Oh, I can't be plagued correcting, and correcting. Much better have it all out, and begin again."

"And fray and dirty your paper to no purpose.

Is that better, Jessie? But take care! What a heavy black line, where it should be scarcely discernible."

"Oh, it is only the charcoal. And I really cannot be bothered making such light strokes; a good, heavy, bold touch for me."

"As bold as you like," said Margaret laughing; "but that does not imply your putting shade where there should be light. And what kind of chalk line can you draw above that coarse charcoal one? Do be more attentive, Jessie, you never can fancy that chin is like your copy?"

"No, certainly not," she said good-humouredly. "But as to being attentive, I really cannot; so you may spare yourself the trouble of advising me to be so."

"I can, because I ought," whispered Margaret.

Jessie blushed, but went on more carefully. In a few minutes a servant came in with a luncheon tray. His mistress, he said, wished the young ladies to be ready by half-past one, and as she had had luncheon early, she had sent theirs up to save their time.

Jessie sprang up, and began to bundle away her things, making so much noise, and shaking the table so much, that both Rose and Anna complained bitterly.

"Well, well, I cannot help it. I am so much excited and pleased I cannot help making a bustle."

"I can, because I ought," again said Margaret gently.

"Come now, Margaret, I won't hear that again and I have changed my mind. I won't have tha

maxim. For one thing, it is not true; I can't do all I ought."

"Yes it is, if you take its *full* meaning, dear Jessie," said Margaret earnestly, and with emphasis.

"Of course it is," said Rose dictatorially. "One can quite force one's-self to do right, if one is only willing. It is so childish to say I cannot do this or that."

"You have scarcely caught the full meaning or strength of my saying, though, Rose," said Margaret, in the same earnest manner. "It means that He who commands us to do His will, will most assuredly give us the strength required."

"Oh," said Rose with a little hesitation, "of course I know we must seek the help of God's Spirit to do right; but still, a person of any sense or strength of mind will find little difficulty in doing their duty in ordinary cases."

Margaret gave a little sigh of disappointment, but she did not attempt to continue the conversation. She refused Anna and Jessie's solicitations to go out with them, as she wished to write to France. They were much disappointed, but Rose was secretly pleased. Margaret was apt to receive more notice than herself, and Rose never quite forgot that Margaret was a governess. They all went away to dress, and Margaret was left alone.

Margaret's sigh of disappointment might have been checked, her heart might have been cheered and encouraged, had she observed Anna's earnest attention

to what she had said to Rose and Jessie, had she seen the bright expression of deep happiness which passed over her face, when Margaret spoke of the strength the Lord is willing to give to those who seek to do His will. But Anna was quiet and reserved by nature, and her indolent habits had made her still more so. Margaret did not as yet know the depth of real piety, the earnest endeavours after sanctification, which were hidden under that quiet, indolent exterior.

Margaret turned to the letters she meant to answer. She had received them that morning; and they had filled her heart with joy and gratitude. One was from Pierre, to announce to his dear sister that he was going to be married. Margaret knew and highly esteemed the object of his choice. She was the grandniece of old Marie; she was a very well educated young woman, and in every respect one Margaret would have chosen for her Norah's daughter-in-law. Pierre's letter pleased her greatly. It was so manly, sensible and unaffected, and at the same time showed so many traces of tenderness and kindliness of feeling, of simple single-heartedness, as gave her perfect satisfaction that Norah's fond hopes of her boy had been fully realized.

Norah's letter was a very happy one; calling upon her child to rejoice with her and Philippe in the choice Pierre had made, and in the way in which everything had been made pleasant and smooth for the young people. They were going to build an addition to their house, and all to live together; and Norah wrote hope-

fully of being soon able to come over to England to see her dear children, now that Pierre had a wife to take care of him and of his father during her absence.

It was a pleasant task to read over and answer these letters, and Margaret felt her heart lightened and cheered when she had finished; felt ready to begin new plans for the improvement of her young companions, and able to think more cheerfully of the failure of those she had hitherto tried. She was on the lawn when the carriage arrived, and Rose and Jessie hastened to join her, full of news and eager to tell it. One of Margaret's qualifications for a pleasant companion was her readiness to listen to, and be interested in, the concerns of those around her. She was careful never to check her young pupils unseasonably, never to seem cold or indifferent when they were excited and happy, never to indulge in disparaging remarks about anything which had greatly pleased them. If such checks or disparagements were absolutely called for, she knew well that though they might be given advantageously at another time, they must be worse than useless while the excitement of pleasure was at its height. Without reasoning, scarcely conscious of it, the girls had learned to trust securely in this ready sympathy, and to carry to her all their joys and wonders.

"It really was Miss Percival," said Rose eagerly. "And she looks quite as pretty, as elegant, and graceful in a room as on horseback. She is very agreeable. Such pleasant, lady-like manners."

"And has taken a great fancy to me," put in Jessie archly.

Rose affected not to hear, but her colour rose a little.

"Miss Percival is so well informed too," she continued. "She has read a great deal, and seems to have a most excellent taste."

"That is to say, she admires all I admire, likes all I like," again interrupted Jessie.

"Come now, Jessie, you know you liked her too," said Anna good-naturedly, seeing that Rose was really angry.

"Oh, well enough," was Jessie's careless answer. "I only wondered how she so quickly discovered all our good qualities so as to conceive for us such a violent friendship so very speedily."

"But did you not see Miss M'Leod too?" asked Margaret, willing to turn the conversation.

"No, she is far too busy and important a person to be found at home in a forenoon," Rose answered in a tone of such visible pique, that even Mrs. Cecil observed it, and said with some surprise—

"Rose, my love, have you any reason to dislike Hester M'Leod?"

"Me, Mamma! No, indeed; I know nothing about her."

"But you speak as if you did," persisted Mrs. Cecil, in her own soft gentle tone. "You know she could not be aware that we were to call to-day, so it would be foolish to be offended because she was not at home."

"Offended, Mamma!" she repeated loftily, "I am not at all offended. Hester M'Leod is nothing to me, and I am nothing to her. I never dreamt of being offended."

Mrs. Cecil remarked mildly, that she did not quite understand Rose, that she certainly thought from her manner that she was angry with Hester about something.

"Understand her!" cried Jessie mischievously. "No, Mamma, you never can, nor will. Don't you know that Rose hates the very name of Hester M'Leod, because she considers her a rival to her own peerless self."

Rose indignantly repelled the charge, and contemptuously said she could not conceive in what she had reason to fear rivalship with Hester.

"Oh," cried Jessie, delighted to have provoked her, "you know Hugh and John have always praised her good-humour and cheerfulness so much, and have even sometimes hinted that a certain fair lady, who shall be nameless, might advantageously imitate her in some respects. Then, you know, Dr. Stewart extols that same Hester as a sort of paragon of all goodness."

"As I have not the least intention of entering the lists as a Lady Bountiful," said Rose in the same lofty manner, "I cannot be a rival with Miss M'Leod in Dr. Stewart's good graces."

"No, indeed! Really not, Rose!" said Jessie with an affected air of simplicity. "Dear me, how stupid I am! I had always fancied you wished to be first in everything."

Rose looked the anger she did not deign to speak. and Margaret called the teasing Jessie away to show her a shrub they had been speaking of.

"You should not be so provoking, dear Jessie," she said earnestly, when they were out of hearing of the others.

"Should I not?" was her laughing answer. "But I cannot help it. Rose looks so provokingly lofty and self-satisfied; and I can pull her down so nicely. I really cannot help it."

"Ah, Jessie, Jessie; 'I can, because I ought.'"

"Now hold your tongue, you dear, good preacher. Don't look so sadly beseeching, and I will promise to try not to be so overwhelmingly witty for the future. But, then, you must promise in return to tell me the story you spoke of."

"Well, if you choose to go out with me this evening, I will. I have not had a walk all day."

"Agreed, agreed, and you shall see how discreet and respectful I shall be all dinner-time."

How Jessie kept this promise history does not say. I suspect her demureness and respect would be rather too visibly overstrained; but I know she and Margaret went out to the garden together after dinner, and having found a sheltered seat they sat down, and Margaret told the story of Norah's journey to Paris.

She told it simply, but with great feeling, and endeavoured to bring out the details in such a way as might arouse Jessie's attention to the contrast between

her own giddy frivolity, and the earnest, thoughtful, unselfish character of Norah. Jessie listened attentively, seemed interested, Margaret hoped even affected; but as soon as the story was concluded, she exclaimed in her usual tone of nonchalance—

"Well, Margaret, it is a pretty story, and an interesting story, I must confess, but I should have liked it better if it had not had a moral tacked to it."

"Ah, Jessie, Jessie," said Margaret sadly.

"Ah, Margaret, Margaret," mimicked Jessie. "But come, Margaret, surely if I really do dislike a moral to a story, it is better to say so honestly, than to pretend to be better and wiser than I am."

Margaret shook her head.

"Now what does that portentous shake of the head mean? I know you think me brimful of faults, but at least, you must acknowledge that humbug and affectation are not among them. Another shake of the head! Come, Margaret, do you not at least give me credit for being quite sincere, quite without pretension or affectation of any kind?"

"Shall I tell you, Jessie, exactly what I think? You will not be offended?"

"Offended?" and she laughed gaily. "No one ever offends me. I don't know how to set about being offended."

"Well, then, I shall draw two portraits of you, and you shall choose which of them you please."

"Agreed, agreed. Come, begin; I am all im-

patience. I am not at all afraid of having my picture taken."

And she put on such a comical air of conscious beauty, that Margaret could scarcely help smiling. She paused for a few seconds to recover her gravity, for she wished to speak very impressively.

"Well, Jessie, you are either a girl who is wholly bent upon the gratification of, what shall I call it?—your wishes—your feelings: these are too serious names for such an idle, trifling thing. It is a mere taste for indulging in a kind of childish, flippant wit, utterly beneath the powers of mind with which God has blessed you. But worthless as it is, you are so bent upon gratifying it, as to be perfectly indifferent to the feelings and happiness of those around you; destitute of all gratitude to your kind father and mother, wholly careless whether you please or grieve those brothers and sisters whom the Lord has bid you love as yourself. Principles and feelings you have none. You are entirely guided by the whim of the moment, you care for nothing but the gratification of your own fancies and caprices."

"Margaret, Margaret, you are extraordinarily severe," said Jessie, trying to laugh off the vexation she felt.

"I judge from your own actions and words, Jessie. You wound your gentle loving mother's heart by your wilful disregard of her wishes; you vex one sister by proclaiming her faults to all who will hear you and

persist the more gaily the more vexed you see she is; you tease another by your careless heedlessness, and glory in showing her that her vexation or annoyance is a matter of perfect indifference, nay, rather of merriment, to you. You must acknowledge, Jessie, that you are proud of your disregard of every reproof, every complaint. What do your light, scoffing answers mean, if not that you wish to be thought quite unconcerned about the pain or sorrow you may cause to those around you? Worse than that, Jessie, do you not often glory in showing that you feel not the least shame or sorrow for such a fault as breaking your promise, saying one thing, and doing another?"

"Well, Margaret, you may say what you please, think what you please, I am contented to continue the gay, good-humoured, happy creature I am."

"Gay!" repeated Margaret almost bitterly. "Is it the object of your ambition to excel in gaiety? And yet, does not that senseless lamb playing at its mother's foot, surpass you in such a qualification? Good-humoured! That is to say, you are not angered by any reproof, no expression of the sorrow you cause moves you, because you do not care whether you give pain or pleasure. It is the same to you, whether those you love approve or disapprove of your conduct. But I ought not to say that you love any one; if we are to believe your own words, you have no affection for any one, you have no desire, no feeling beyond the wish to gratify the impulse of the moment."

"Well," said Jessie quietly, "there is one picture finished, now for the other."

"The other is, I firmly believe, I earnestly hope, the true one. Despicable as it is, it is at least better than the heartless, unfeeling, unprincipled character, I have already drawn. You have, then, some good and right feelings, some natural affection, some warmth of heart; but you are under the strange delusion, that to conceal, destroy, and crush these is the wisest, the best, the most praiseworthy course to follow."

"Nay," said Jessie with affected carelessness, "I never think about good, wise, praiseworthy courses. I am content to do what it pleases me at the time to do, what makes me happiest. I may not be a very useful or a very virtuous character, but at all events I am a happy one."

"What sentiments to come from the lips of an immortal creature!" exclaimed Margaret, almost despairing of making any impression. "Happy! can you so degrade such a holy word? Can you for a moment fancy that your idle trifling gaiety deserves the same name, as the deep heart-feeling which brightens and strengthens the whole being of such a one as Norah, when she has succeeded in the accomplishment of some great and good object? When she has devoted herself to the service of that Saviour who bought her with His own precious blood, and for His sake, in the strength of His blessed Spirit, denied herself, laboured, toiled, suffered, to fulfil some duty which He has laid

upon her. Happiness! what do you know of happiness?"

"Ah! but then you say, I know nothing of affection either. Now I happen to have a *wee* bit of affection for a certain person near me, or perhaps I might not listen to her bitter words so patiently," and she put her arms round Margaret's neck, and looked smilingly in her face.

"Dear Jessie," said Margaret, with an earnestness that brought tears into her eyes, "I know you are not what you try to seem. I know God has given you warm, kindly feelings. But why, oh why, will you stifle them? Why are you so bent upon concealing that which it would so greatly add to the happiness of those who love you to see? You say you are sincere, because you never pretend to be better than you are; but you are either constantly aiming to appear worse, or else you are anxious to destroy all those feelings and thoughts, all that gentleness, kindness, and unselfishness, which is woman's best gift and greatest happiness."

Jessie was evidently a little moved, but she was quite as evidently anxious to conceal it; and to shake off the gravity awakened by Margaret's words and manner, she started up, and saying gaily that she could listen to no more preaching then, but would go and gather Margaret a nosegay to reward her for her good advice, she ran off, and left Margaret alone.

Margaret's heart was very heavy. Her disappoint-

ment was very bitter. What could impress or move such a character? She sat for some time in mournful meditation, and when she saw Jessie coming back with her nosegay, it required a strong effort, and earnest prayer for grace and patience, to enable her to receive her with her usual kindness.

Afterwards when she reflected more calmly over the whole conversation, she could see a little ground for hope. Jessie had certainly been a little moved. And she was able with quiet faith, to take this effort at usefulness to her Saviour's feet, seeking pardon from Him for her own imperfections in it, and trusting to Him to bless it in His own good time, and to give her wisdom to devise, and perseverance to carry out, some new and more hopeful plan for the benefit of her wayward pupil.

CHAPTER VI.

ANNA.

Miss Percival came over to call at Auchenbeith in the course of a few days, and brought an invitation to all the Cecils to spend a day at Saintsel, early in the following week. The Percivals seemed most flatteringly anxious to be intimate, and this naturally increased the favourable opinion their new friends had already formed of them.

But as yet nothing had been seen of Hester M'Leod. Her mother had called and had apologized for her absence. Hester had been all ready to accompany her, she said, but a message had arrived from the manse. Mrs. Stewart wanted very much to see her about a poor woman, in whom they were both much interested.

"Well," was Jessie's remark after Mrs. M'Leod's departure, "if the young lady be like her Mamma, she is welcome to stay away as long as she pleases."

The other girls shared in the same feeling.

But Margaret was conscious of a great curiosity to see her. She laughingly told herself it was a feeling of perversity, which made her fancy that she should

like the despised Hester more than the favoured Emma Percival. The latter was too courteous, too anxious to please, too conformable to every one's tastes, to be quite agreeable to Margaret, although she felt, while with her, the influence of her gentle, amiable manners.

Mrs. M'Leod was certainly not very attractive. She was a grave, almost stern-looking woman, and seemed little desirous of making herself agreeable. But Margaret fancied that a softened likeness of her might be a very interesting character. From what Dr. Stewart said, Hester must be an earnest-minded, high-principled girl, and such a companion Margaret felt she peculiarly stood in need of. But Hester did not seem inclined to be a companion to any of them.

Margaret and Jessie were the only ones who even saw Hester for several weeks. They met her at the cottage of a poor sick man to whom Margaret had carried some little comforts from Mrs. Cecil. Her manner towards them was cold, almost repulsive, and Jessie was unmerciful in her ridicule of the grave, stately Duchess, as she called her. But Margaret, knowing the prejudice which the Cecils entertained against her, thought it quite possible that Hester's coldness might proceed from a similar prejudice on her side.

In the meantime, the day arrived for the visit to Saintsel, and poor Anna was unable to go. She had a sore throat, and was confined to bed. She was always apt to get melancholy and depressed when she

was unwell, and the disappointment about her visit, did not on this occasion help to make her very cheerful.

Margaret with some difficulty obtained leave to stay at home with her, and having seen the rest off, she went up to Anna's bedroom, anticipating a somewhat dull day, but determined to do her best to cheer her patient, and to bear her fretfulness cheerfully.

Anna did look quite sufficiently dull and fretful. She was full of complaints. Her throat was very painful, her head ached, her eyes were sore, and there was such a glare of light in the room.

Margaret agreed that the room was very close, and that it *was* trying to be in bed on such a bright summer day; pitied her for the pain in her throat and head, drew down the blind, arranged the curtain so as to shade her eyes, and at last shamed her out of her discontented mood.

When she saw that she had partly succeeded, she proposed to read to her, but Anna declined the offer.

"I cannot keep you in this dull, close room, Margaret," she said, "you must go out and enjoy this lovely weather. It is the very day for finishing your study of the old chestnut tree, and you must not stay here."

"Oh," Margaret answered playfully, "I am quite determined to stay whether you choose to make use of me or not. So you had better allow me the pleasure of feeling that I am doing some good."

After a little more argument, Anna consented, and Margaret asked what she would read.

"I should like poetry, if you do not dislike it."

"Certainly not. And what shall it be?"

"There are all my favourites in that book-case. Will you choose?" and Anna pointed to a pretty little book-case which stood opposite her bed.

Margaret went to it. Anna watched her, and saw that she at once passed over the first set of volumes.

"Ah," she said smiling, "I see you don't like my favourite, Mrs. Hemans."

"Is Mrs. Hemans such a favourite?" said Margaret. "Well, I shall gratify you by choosing her."

And after looking over the volumes she chose one, and bringing it to the bedside, she sat down and read several passages in that simple, yet feeling manner, that tells so truly the reader enters into what he reads.

"How beautifully you read!" exclaimed Anna. "And is it not beautiful poetry?"

"The strain of feeling is very pure, refined, and tender, and the language is truly beautiful and suggestive," said Margaret, glancing over the book.

"There are such exquisitely beautiful thoughts connected with natural objects! She seems to have had such a genuine love of nature," observed Anna.

"Yes, and her poetry is well calculated to instil such a love into her readers."

"Why, then, dear Margaret, did you pass her over so decidedly?"

"Because," said Margaret frankly, "I do not think her a very good author for one of your character, dear

Anna. There is a sort of luxuriating in melancholy, which I do not think very healthy. For some of my friends I should think her poetry most improving; but not for you."

"It is a pleasing melancholy. I like it."

"Perhaps the more pleasing the more dangerous."

Anna mused for a few minutes, and then said modestly—"I don't mean to say, dear Margaret, that you are wrong, but——I can't very well express what I mean. Only I think a person of real feeling must be sometimes melancholy. I think we ought not to shun the melancholy God sends. Ought we?"

"You do not quite understand me, dear Anna," was Margaret's earnest reply. "No real Christian can desire to be insensible to trials which God sends, but neither can a real Christian desire to be ungrateful for His mercies. Now the train of thought and feeling which I fear Mrs. Hemans' writings may awaken in one of your character, is one which loves to nurse sorrow, to refuse to enjoy the good which is given to us. In short, a determination to look upon the dark side."

"I would rather err on that side, than on the side of a thoughtless insensibility."

"And must we err on either, dear Anna?" asked Margaret gently. "Ought we not carefully to shun the extreme towards which our natural tendencies draw us?"

"And you think me too apt to dwell upon griefs, too apt to forget, to be ungrateful for joys? Well, Margaret,

I acknowledge you are right; it is that tendency which often makes me so fretful. I resolve against fretfulness and murmuring, again and again, but I make no progress. The tendency is so strong, and I am so weak."

"The dark side again, dear Anna. You bid your eyes be shut to all but your own weakness, and the temptation's strength."

"And the bright side, Margaret?"

"That your Lord and Saviour knows *all* your weaknesses, *all* your temptations, and will supply *all* your need."

"Ah, yes, that does me good," she said with much feeling, "as your words did the other day, when you said, that He who commands the duty will give the strength. But, then, Margaret, I forget this when I should most remember it."

"And is not the remembering it a duty for which He will give you strength. Are we not commanded to rejoice in the Lord, and will He not enable us to fulfil His commands?"

"Yes, that is a commandment I do require to be reminded of. Sadness and discouragement are always nearer me than trust and joy."

There was a short pause. Margaret was reflecting upon the comfort and encouragement that had been lying in her path without her perceiving it. Anna's character was indeed opening up to her a promising field of labour. Anna had taken up the book and was looking over it.

"I see," she said, "what you mean in Mrs. Hemans. She associates such sad thoughts and feelings with those very objects in nature which, to most people, suggest happy, cheerful ideas."

"Yes; and I do not think it quite right. When we think that it is the loving-kindness of a Father that has shed such brightness and beauty around our daily paths, and has impressed such an aspect of smiling joyfulness upon the face of nature, it seems ungrateful not to rejoice in the works of His hands."

"I suppose you are right. But do you not think that Mrs. Hemans had great enjoyment in her wood walks, even although every rustling of the breeze, every song of the birds, seemed to whisper of melancholy?"

"Yes, as I said, she luxuriates in melancholy. I never should like to judge any one, far less one for whom I feel such a tender pity and admiration, as I do for her. But in my own case, I know, that when I hear the joyous song of the birds, or watch the waves dancing on the sea-shore, or mark the gay flicker of the sunbeams through the leaves, they send a spirit of gladness home to my heart, which strengthens and invigorates me for every duty and every trial. And as I know that it is my Father in Heaven who has impressed such beauty upon these things, so do I believe that it is He who bids them speak such strengthening, cheering words to me, and I should feel it wrong to shut them out of my heart, or not to endeavour to hear them more and more distinctly, and to profit by them more and more fully."

"And you are right when you say that such cheering, strengthening words are most necessary to me."

"And, therefore, I think you ought not to indulge yourself too much in reading poetry which has a tendency to attach other influences to these natural objects."

"I see," said Anna, after again glancing over a few pages, "that many of Mrs. Hemans' melancholy images are associated with the memory of departed friends. But, Margaret, we should wish to remember those we have loved; you could not wish to forget them although the remembrance brings sorrow?"

"Forget them!" exclaimed Margaret, with a sudden burst of emotion. "Ah, Anna, could you see into the inner chamber of my heart, you would see there as in a shrine, the image of my own dearest mother, every feature of her face, every trait of her character, engraved there indelibly, never to be effaced; you would see that it is one of my greatest pleasures to revisit these fond memories, to dwell upon them and revive them, until I have that darling mother again by my side."

And Margaret hid her face upon the bed unable to say more. Anna took one of her hands and pressed it affectionately and sympathizingly. For some minutes she did not speak, and then she said in a subdued voice, as if afraid to intrude upon such a sacred thing as grief—

"I am glad you have said this, dear Margaret. You must forgive me, but I have sometimes fancied, that good and kind as you are, you had not those deep feel-

ings I *so* love, or that you thought it right to check and weaken them."

"No, no, Anna, I hope I shall never think that. I believe those deep feelings are given to us by our Father, and shall we dare to pluck up or destroy what He has planted?"

"And yet wise people say that too much feeling is a source of misery."

"That depends upon its nature, I should think," said Margaret, smiling. "Revenge and hatred are deep enough feelings, and the deeper they are, the more miserable their possessor. But, of course, I did not mean feelings of that kind."

"No, of course not. But even of good, right feelings, people say the same thing. Such feelings as affection for our relations."

"Even right feelings may be misplaced and ungoverned, but cannot, I think, be too warm, too deep. Our Lord commands us to control and direct these affections with which He has blessed us. But we must not forget that He also calls upon us to watch over them, and guard them carefully from aught that could injure, blight, or weaken them."

"I once knew a young lady," said Anna, thoughtfully, "who, when her father died, mourned so excessively for him, that she became very ill, and thus laid a heavy burden of grief and anxiety upon her poor heart-broken mother. And every one said her affections were too strong."

"No, no," said Margaret earnestly. "Ungoverned, unbalanced, but not too strong; I must think, right, true feeling cannot be too strong. Her affection for her father called for deep grief for his loss, but affection for her mother should have taught her to enter into, and sympathize in, her deeper grief; and affectionate submission to the will of her Heavenly Father would have prevented such excessive sorrow as you describe. Our God requires us so to control our feelings as that they may assist but never impede the performance of every duty, but He never calls upon us to deaden or destroy what He gives."

"But an idolatrous affection is too strong, Margaret?"

"Misplaced, dear Anna. It gives the creature more love than the Creator. But in most cases, if not all, it is our love to God that must be increased, not our love to those He commands us to love, that must be weakened."

"Still the more we love, the deeper our sorrow when we lose them," said Anna.

"Yes, but even in our moments of bitterest anguish, surely, surely, we never could wish our love had been less."

"No, no," said Anna earnestly.

"'Tis better to have loved, and lost,
Than never to have loved at all."

"Whose is that?" asked Margaret quickly.

"Tennyson. Do you not know it?" and Anna's

eyes sparkled with pleasure at the thought of reading Margaret some favourite passages.

"No, I have not read much poetry, Anna. Not nearly so much as you, I suspect."

"But you like poetry, do you not?" she asked eagerly.

"Some poetry very, very much."

"And we shall read some of my favourites together," said Anna joyfully. "They shall be more healthy and invigorating than my poor Mrs. Hemans."

"Agreed," said Margaret smiling; "but you must not talk any more now. You are flushed and excited. You will make your headache worse."

"No, no, it is much better. You have made it better. I suspect," she added with an ingenuous blush, "it is this looking upon the dark side that makes me think myself so very ill whenever I have any little ailment."

"Perhaps it may, dear Anna," said Margaret kindly; "but we are not going to let this dark side come so much before us for the future. Are we?"

"I hope not. You have done me good, Margaret. The very sound of your voice cheers me."

"And you have done me good," whispered Margaret, as she kissed Anna affectionately.

"I? How have I done you good? I have done little but complain since you came up to me."

"You have made me happy. You have shown me that you can understand many thoughts and feelings

which I fancied I must keep shut up, because ——," Margaret stopped embarrassed. She could not tell Anna that she felt Rose and Jessie were uncongenial companions. Anna understood, and with true delicacy of feeling, went on as if Margaret's speech had been concluded.

"And we have one great hope, one great tie, have we not, dear Margaret?"

"Yes, Anna, I trust we love and believe in the same Saviour. But now I positively will not talk any more. You must be quiet."

"No, I feel so much better, I mean to get up, and go into Mamma's dressing-room, to get this room aired. Do you go out to walk, dear Margaret, and when you come in we will dine comfortably together in Mamma's pretty room."

Margaret agreed, and she greatly enjoyed her stroll through the park. Such bright, happy thoughts passed through her mind, as she recalled the conversation, and thought of the pleasant companionship she might enjoy, even with the fretful, complaining Anna.

After dinner they had another long talk over books, pictures, and flowers, for Anna shared Margaret's enthusiastic love for all these pleasures.

"I am glad, Margaret," said Anna, after a short pause, "that you do not condemn *all* sad trains of thought. Some people think one ought never to be sorrowful."

"I think, dear Anna, our great business is to endeavour to find out exactly how our Lord would have

us to think or feel in all cases, at all times. And I should think it quite as wrong to put away the sorrow He sends, the sad lesson His providence is meant to teach, as to refuse the gladness of heart which some of His works and dealings seem intended to inspire."

They talked about Anna's difficulties in overcoming her natural despondency and fretfulness; and Margaret reminded her that she might possibly at first meet with a trial in the want of sympathy and confidence of those around her.

"Forgive me if I say, dear Anna, that you have taught them to expect complaints and fretfulness. And sometimes, when you have struggled hard to subdue them, you may be misunderstood, may be supposed to feel as on former occasions you would have felt, and may be accused of a spirit you know you have, with sore conflict, put away. I do not say this to discourage you but to prepare you, that you may seek and obtain the greater strength. Remember the Lord knows, and will supply *all* your need. His eyes are upon the righteous, His ears are open to their cry."

"Ah, Margaret, that word 'righteous' frightens me back, when I would lay hold upon such a precious promise."

"My dear Anna," said Margaret earnestly, "it is that very word which makes it so exceedingly precious, because it shows that our right to it can lie only in the righteousness of Christ, and His righteousness can never fail."

Anna's eyes filled with tears as Margaret spoke, but they were tears of joy.

"I know very little, dear Margaret," she said, "or rather I think of little; I remember little. I knew well that my Saviour's righteousness was offered to me to clothe myself in, to be counted as mine, but I never thought of applying it in this way."

"But is not Christ our prophet, to teach us to know and to apply. And, dear Anna, let us never forget that He is far more willing to teach, than we to learn; far more willing to give His Holy Spirit, than we to ask it."

In such talk the time passed so happily and quickly away, that both started when they heard the sound of the carriage-wheels coming up the avenue. Margaret staid one moment to remind Anna to prepare for Jessie's raillery and teasing about the fretfulness she had shown before they went away, and then she ran down to welcome them with her own bright smile, and cordial, kindly words.

"Well, we have had such a happy day, and see what a number of cuttings I have got," cried Jessie, who was the first to alight. "Come with me to the gardener's cottage. He must take care of them for me through the night, and put them in pots in the morning."

"Patience, patience," was Margaret's laughing answer. "I must help Rose to get out that load of books she is collecting. Why, Rose, what generous lenders your new friends must be!"

"Oh, Emma would lend me every book in her library," was Rose's exulting answer. "And she has such an excellent collection, we can get any book on any subject from her. Thank you, Margaret, thank you; Jessie, with her usual kind consideration, has left me to get them out as I can, although she borrowed more than half."

"And with the same kind consideration she is going to carry off Margaret. Now come away at once, Margaret; Thomas can carry these books as well as you."

Margaret put her good-humouredly aside, and having deposited her load of books, returned to relieve Mrs. Cecil of a basket full of beautiful hot-house flowers.

"What splendid flowers!" she cried, her eyes sparkling with delight. "What a treat to Anna, to see these after her dull day in her own room."

"I am going to ask you, dear Margaret, to arrange them for me in the vases. Your taste is so good," said Mrs. Cecil.

"Now, Mamma, she positively shall not touch your flowers, until she has gone with me. So come, Margaret, I will not be refused," and she tried to take the basket.

But Margaret resisted all importunity, telling her playfully, yet firmly, that she should attend to the oldest first; that she should not go with her until she had carried the books and flowers up stairs.

"But I seized upon you first and it is first come

first served; and I cannot go to the gardener's without you, because Rose will tell you all the news while I am away. And so you must come with me first."

"Indeed, I cannot encourage your impatience, dear Jessie. Give your cuttings to Martha, she will take them quite carefully to the gardener's, and do you help me to carry the books up to Anna's room, she will like to see them."

Jessie was forced to yield, but declared she would carry no dusty, fusty books, but the basket of flowers.

"And then," she added, "you will perhaps listen to me, and not keep peep, peeping with such great, greedy eyes into the basket, as if you wanted to eat them all up."

"But I shall keep peeping with greedy eyes at the books," said Margaret, laughing. "I don't want to hear your news until Anna can hear it too, and I do want to know the names of all these books. What a medley! 'Macaulay's Essays;' I am so glad you have got that. We will read it aloud, Rose."

"Yes, and there is the book on Geology Papa spoke of, and one upon Vegetable Physiology, and" ——

"Sir Walter Scott's Lady of the Lake! Oh, I want to read that," interrupted Margaret.

"I did not know you cared so much for mere stories," said Rose disdainfully.

"Yes, Margaret cares for everything that is good and nice, and is not ashamed of confessing it, as some one I know is."

"Jessie, dear Jessie," remonstrated Margaret in a low, earnest tone.

"And is not indifferent to the pain or pleasure of others, as some one else I know is," continued Jessie, as if she had not heard Margaret's interruption. "That was your accusation, was it not, my dear, good, little governess?"

There was something in the tone of this concluding whisper, which pleased and cheered Margaret. She thought it gave a faint hope, that her earnest remonstrance had not been so totally thrown away as she had feared. And when she again interfered to check Jessie's provoking sallies to Anna, she had the pleasure of seeing her yield with only a comical grimace or two. She could not, she knew, hope to make an impression upon her very quickly. She must be content to see her at first yield with reluctance to her influence and entreaties, but that she should yield at all was a point gained, and Margaret was thankful for it.

Altogether it had been a happy, a strengthening, an encouraging day to Margaret. And she felt it the more because her anticipations had been so different.

"I am to do what I can, and leave the event in the Lord's hands," she again repeated to herself, when she was alone in her own room, but the tone of her spirit as she said it was hopeful, not depressed and despairing, as when she had last used the same words.

CHAPTER VII

THE WORKING SOCIETY.

Some weeks passed away. The intimacy between the Ceeils and Miss Percival advaneed rapidly. Rose in particular was completely charmed with her new friend. She was in her eyes the most beautiful, most accomplished, and most amiable girl in the world. Jessie's quiek penetration enabled her to perceive some of Emma's defeets a little more clearly, and she often teased Rose by her areh, but true remarks. Still Emma really was an amiable girl, and they all liked her, and were all in turn flattered by her violent liking to them.

Hester M'Leod had been seen, but only by Anna, and only during a formal morning visit. Neither Rose nor Jessie would aceompany their mother upon that occasion. Rose was glad to find some very pressing occupation to exeuse her, and Jessie openly declared she was too frightened for that grave, severe-looking Mrs. M'Leod, to plaee herself voluntarily within the sphere of her observation.

"She looks," she added, "as if she were continually looking at all one's little faults through a microscope,

and writing them down in the tablet of her memory to produce them to one's everlasting confusion."

Anna was always more ready to be her mother's companion than either of the others. She was both from natural amiability of temper and from principle more willing to sacrifice her own wishes to her. And there was, besides, a strong tie between her and Mrs. Cecil.

Mrs. Cecil was a sincere and devoted Christian, though a weak and doubting one. Both mother and daughter were too reserved to converse freely upon the subject, but each knew the other's opinions and confided in the other's sympathy.

Upon returning from the visit, Anna had firmly, though good-humouredly, refused to gratify Jessie's curiosity about the impression Hester had made upon her. But to Margaret, she confessed that she had not been much attracted by her.

"She is very cold and stiff," she said, "and promises fair to grow up an exact copy of her singularly disagreeable mother."

"Mrs. M'Leod is certainly not prepossessing, but I do somehow feel interested in her. I have a notion she is not really so cold as she seems to be, but that she thinks it her duty to be so."

"Her duty to be cold and disagreeable! what an idea, Margaret."

"A very mistaken one certainly. But still I think she holds it."

And Margaret was not far wrong. Mrs. M'Leod

was not a cold-hearted woman, but she had little tolerance for the infirmities, little consideration for the feelings either of herself or others, perhaps less for her own than for any other person's. She was earnestly desirous, I should rather say thoroughly determined, to do her duty in all cases and at any sacrifice. But she was too narrow-minded to perceive always very clearly what that duty was. I think she had a sort of unconscious belief that whatever was painful must be right, no effort of self-denial or self-sacrifice could be wrong.

In nothing did this peculiarity show itself more strongly than in her conduct towards Hester, her only daughter. She had several sons before Hester was born. She had very earnestly desired to have a daughter, and she felt her heart go out to her with a love tenfold stronger than her other children had inspired. But as soon as she became aware of this she set herself strenuously to subdue this overweening partiality, she actually endeavoured to weaken her affection for her own child. She taught herself to be more inflexibly strict to Hester than to any of the others, to scrutinize her character with a more impartial keenness, to judge her faults with a more unsparing severity.

Such an education might have injured an ordinary character; but Hester had a bold, fearless spirit, which was checked, but not broken, by her mother's severity, a most loving, warm heart, which could not be chilled. She did acquire some of her mother's coldness of manner and imbibe some of her uncompromising opinions.

but she was not as yet, at least, by any means so repulsive and disagreeable, and I do not think that in any circumstances she could ever have become so.

Her feelings if not deeper, were quicker, more susceptible, her temper more hopeful and sunny, and her intellect of a higher order. I do not think she could ever have been so narrow-minded as Mrs. M'Leod.

Her father's frequent illness and severe sufferings had a softening influence upon her character. From the time she was eight years old, she had been accustomed to help her mother in waiting upon him, and nursing him, and this had brought into play all the gentler, tenderer parts of her nature; and, latterly, the friendship of the good, warm-hearted Dr. Stewart, and his excellent wife, had done her incalculable good. They were childless, and I think loved Hester as if she had been their own girl, and she returned their love with all the warmth of her loving nature. Mrs. Stewart was delicate, and was glad to get Hester as ambassadress to many of the cottages of the poor parishioners. And acting under her directions, Hester got many a lesson in kind, tender consideration for the lesser feelings and smaller infirmities of those around her, which she could never have learned from her stern, unbending mother.

One forenoon when Hester was out on the lawn with her father and mother consulting about the removal of some shrubs, they saw Dr. Stewart coming across the field towards their house. Hester ran to open the gate for him, and to welcome him with her brightest smile.

"It is well for me you look so propitious this morning, fair lady," he said, "for I have a favour to ask of you."

"And you are terribly afraid that I shall refuse to grant it. Are you not?" she asked in the same jesting tone.

After Dr. Stewart had paid his respects to Colonel and Mrs. M'Leod, he turned to his young favourite to explain his wishes.

He had been dining at Saintsel the previous day, and he found the ladies there, he said, very anxious to find some means to be useful to their poorer neighbours.

"One would think they might have found some way of being so, long ere this," interrupted Hester.

"Hester!" said her mother in a tone of grave rebuke, "how do you presume to interrupt Dr. Stewart with your idle remarks?"

The good Doctor had felt vexed at the spirit of Hester's observation, but he could not bear to hear her scolded, and he went on hastily with his story.

Lady and Miss Percival wished to set agoing a working society, such as they had heard of being established in other places. They wished the young ladies of the neighbourhood to meet once a fortnight at Saintsel, for the purpose of devoting the afternoon to making clothes, which were either to be sold cheap, or to be given away to the poorer families, as circumstances might render advisable.

"A piece of ostentatious humbug!" pronounced Hes-

ter. "If they will give me a piece of good warm flannel, I will undertake to find use for it, and shall be most happy to work quietly at home; but the idea"—

"Hester," again interrupted Mrs. M'Leod severely, "I am quite surprised at your forwardness. Dr. Stewart in asking you to join, has declared his approval of the plan, and are you going to set up your opinion against his?" Then turning to the Doctor, she said, with grave decision, "Hester will of course do all you wish."

"Well, well, so be it. I shall tell Lady Percival to-morrow;" and he began to talk upon another subject.

Hester waited for a minute or two, and then finding that she was not wanted, she walked quietly away to another part of the shrubbery. She was soon joined by Dr. Stewart, who told her that Mrs. M'Leod had authorized him to carry her off to the manse, as Mrs. Stewart wished to see her about a favourite myrtle which was drooping. Hester joyfully consented, and they set out immediately.

"Your mamma hesitated at first, I can tell you," said Dr. Stewart, as he drew her arm within his. "She says, I spoil you, and encourage you to be forward and presuming. But I told her, I wanted to scold you well, so you must be prepared."

"I am very, very much afraid of your scolding, dear Sir," said Hester, looking archly up at him.

"But, seriously, child, I am not pleased. Why did you speak in that uncharitable way of the Percivals,

or rather why do you think so uncharitably of them? I grant that they have hitherto been too indifferent about the welfare of their poor neighbours, but if they are now inclined to amend, ought we not to rejoice at it, and to do all we can to encourage them?"

"Now inclined for the fuss and excitement of a working society, you ought to say."

"No, I ought not, and I will not say it," replied Dr. Stewart, now really displeased. "Because I read in my Bible such words as these, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.'"

Hester blushed even to tears at this rebuke, but she did not attempt to defend herself. The Doctor went on in his usual kind manner.

"I do partly agree with you, my dear girl, that it is better to do our works of charity quietly and unostentatiously, but this is a particular case. Miss Percival has yet to learn to do good for its own sake alone, and if the little pleasing excitement of this society induces her to begin a kind of good work to which she is yet altogether a stranger, I think we ought to encourage her in it, and by lending our hearty assistance now, perhaps we may hereafter be able to lead her to farther and better efforts. You will meet the young Cecils there too, and you ought to become acquainted with them."

"I have no desire to be so. They are not to my taste."

"Hester, Hester, you are really incorrigible. Pray,

what do you know about them? Have you ever exchanged two words with them in your life?"

"Perhaps not many more," she said laughing.

"And how then do you venture to judge of their character?"

"I have heard about them. From the little hints their brothers have let fall, I have gathered that one is a giddy, frivolous fool; another a self-conceited"——

"Stop, stop. I will have no more such portrait painting. Perhaps some equally friendly, equally charitable artist, may depict Hester M'Leod as a self-willed, self-exalting girl, who thinks herself so perfect, that she will hold communion with none but the very wise and very good."

"I am sorry, very sorry, to have displeased you," said Hester humbly. "But when I have so many urgent duties, is it necessary or right to seek the friendship or acquaintanceship of girls I know I cannot care for?"

"It is your deciding thus rashly and uncharitably, that you cannot care for them, Hester, that displeases me. I tell you, that two out of the four young ladies at Auchenbeith, are most sincere and lively Christians, and one of them is the finest, the most interesting girl I ever met with. We are commanded in God's book, to live charitably with *all* men, and we are farther told, that 'charity suffereth long, and is kind,' that 'charity thinketh no evil.' I put it to your own conscience, to say in how far you exercise that charity?"

Hester looked very grave and sad, and the kind Doctor seeing it dropped the subject, and endeavoured to cheer her again by conversing about other matters in his usual friendly way.

The proposal of the working society was received with more cordiality by the other parties concerned than by Hester. Besides the Auchenbeith party, among whom Margaret was by particular request included, there were two young ladies from the village. One was Miss Douglas, an orphan who resided with two maiden aunts, ladies of good family, but very small fortune. The other was Miss Frazer, daughter of the village doctor.

As Hester had expected, all the Percivals' arrangements were made with a good deal of pomp and ostentation. On the day appointed for their first meeting, the young ladies were received with great state by Lady Percival and Emma in the dining-room, where a sumptuous luncheon was prepared. After partaking of it, Emma led the way to a room which had been formally set apart for the purpose, and where a complicated machinery, so to speak, had been provided for their operations. There was a large and very ornamental chest for the materials, and another for the finished articles, a long table for cutting out upon, and numerous smaller ones for the convenience of the workers, large and small pairs of scissors, boxes of thread, boxes of needles, papers of pins, large pincushions, small pincushions, and emery pincushions, in short, every con-

venience that the heart of workwomen could desire. Sir Edward had undertaken to supply materials for the commencement, and there were immense rolls of blue and white flannel, of cotton cloth, with tapes, buttons, &c. &c., enough to have kept them occupied for six months.

After Emma had with a good deal of ostentation displayed all these preparations, and the others had admired and praised them, an awkward silence ensued. No one seemed to know what was to be done, or who was to do it, what ought to be the beginning, or who was to make it. Margaret was the first to speak.

"I think," she said in her pleasant, cheerful way, "that we should begin to work at once. We should lose no time in putting these convenient appliances to their proper use."

"Certainly," said Emma. "But ought not some one to take the charge. If each one is to make what each one most fancies, we may all perhaps begin to petticoats, or all to gowns; and that would be very absurd;" and she glanced angrily at Hester, who upon their first entrance had quietly taken possession of a roll of blue flannel, and cutting off enough for a petticoat, was already far on in her first seam.

"To be sure," said Rose, "we must have a director; and you, Emma, ought certainly to take that office."

"Oh yes, Miss Percival. Certainly, Miss Percival ought to be director," chimed in Miss Douglas and

Miss Frazer, who were a good deal overawed by all the grandeur around them.

With a graceful bow, Emma expressed her thanks for the honour they did her, and her willingness to do all in her power to discharge the duties of her office aright.

"But," she added, "we ought also to have a treasurer to take charge of the money we collect by our subscriptions, and by the sale of our goods, and of the payments we have to make."

"And a secretary to manage our correspondence and draw up a code of laws and regulations," slyly suggested Jessie, whose sense of the ridiculous was amused by the pomp and ceremony with which Emma and Rose were proceeding. Margaret again interfered.

"Oh," she said pleasantly, "we must not make too much fuss about such a simple afair. If Miss Percival is willing to take the trouble of settling what each person is to do, I think we can manage quite well without such a formidable board of directors."

But Miss Percival seemed to be at a great loss how to set about giving directions. Rose, to relieve her embarrassment, suggested that they ought first to inquire what clothes were most needed at the present time.

"Some poor woman may require baby-clothes immediately, or some old woman a flannel bed-gown, or something of that kind, and if that be the case we ought to begin with them."

"Certainly. But how shall we find out about that?"

said Emma hesitatingly. She did not like to confess that she knew nothing about the wants or circumstances of her poor neighbours.

Margaret had been very active in visiting, and had often induced her young cousins to go with her. But they had not chanced to meet with any one who at that time stood in urgent need of clothing.

"Perhaps," she suggested, "Miss M'Leod could help us. She knows all the poor people. She can perhaps tell us of some needy and deserving persons, and what we can best do to relieve them."

Hester answered drily that she never presumed to decide upon who were needy or deserving, that she did exactly what Mrs. Stewart bade her do, and really could give no opinion of her own. If they chose to make clothes, she had no doubt Mrs. Stewart could find wearers for them, and she went on with her work as quietly and unconcernedly as if she had been in her own parlour.

"Well," said Margaret, "I think Miss M'Leod's is the best plan. Let us put ourselves and our work under Mrs. Stewart's directions. And as we cannot get her advice to-day, let each one choose what article she will make, and before another meeting we will know better what our arrangements should be."

Emma was forced to consent, but not very willingly. She did not like that any one but herself should have the dispensing of the garments and the sort of patronage connected with it; but she could find no rational

objection, and the others approved. A new difficulty now arose. None of the workers could cut out or arrange their own work, and Miss Percival certainly could not do it for them. Ashamed and embarrassed, she begged that Margaret would relieve her from her duties, and take the office of lady-director upon herself.

"Oh, Mrs. Stewart shall be our director," said Margaret cheerfully. "But I shall be glad to be made of use in the cutting-out line."

And with pleasant, kindly looks and ways, she set to work to cut out and arrange the different articles called for, bearing cheerfully and patiently with the laziness of one, the carelessness of another, or the self-conceited determination of a third.

But little work, however, was accomplished this day. The zeal of the party had been cooled by the difficulties thrown in the way at the beginning, and in spite of all Margaret's efforts to encourage and amuse them, they soon began to think that after all much could not be done the first day; it was a good thing they had made all their arrangements; they could now begin to work at once and heartily upon their next meeting; but this was an unsettled day altogether, and perhaps they had done as much as they well could for the first day.

"Yes, yes," cried Jessie, springing up, seizing and carrying off every one's work with her own peculiar air of good-humoured wilfulness. "Put away your work one and all, and let us go with Emma to see the

curious old Saint's well, from which Sir Edward says the place takes its name."

Every one agreed, for although Hester thought them all very silly to be so soon tired, she did not condescend to express any opinion, and secretly triumphed in the issue of such grand preparations.

Jessie and Hester had rather drawn together. Hester was astonished to hear any one so coolly confess her own incapacity and want of inclination for any useful employment, as Jessie had repeatedly done in the course of their operations. But she was pleased with the frankness, and as she thought the sincerity of these avowals, and inclined to regard her with more favour than any of the others. She had at once decided from Margaret's expressive and intelligent countenance, that she was the one of the Cecil party whom Dr. Stewart had so highly praised. But Margaret had greatly lowered herself in her estimation by the way in which she had submitted to all the follies and fancies of her young associates, and with her usual hastiness, Hester had settled that whatever good qualities Margaret might possess, sincerity and straightforwardness were not among the number.

In the course of their walk, Jessie happened accidentally to use Margaret's favourite maxim—"I can, because I ought," and when she saw that Hester was pleased with it, she insisted that she should join Margaret and Anna, and make the former tell the story of Norah's journey to Paris.

Margaret had invited the shy, frightened Miss Douglas to join them, and was kindly endeavouring to amuse her, and set her at ease.

"I don't want to hear the story again," said Jessie, after she had explained her errand. "So, Miss Douglas, you will come with me, and we shall entertain one another."

Miss Douglas would have preferred remaining with Margaret, whose gentle kindness had won her heart. But she was too timid to dream of refusing any request, and the conversation of the three she had left behind, was more unrestrained from her absence.

Hester was delighted with the story, and much affected by Margaret's simple, feeling way of telling it. They kept together through the walk, all Hester's prejudices were overcome, and from that day she and Margaret became great friends.

They met several times in their walks—for Hester, for Margaret's sake, no longer avoided the Cecils as she had done, and each meeting confirmed the favourable impression each had made upon the other.

Margaret felt much interested in Hester's character. She could well understand and sympathize with her in her conflict with her natural infirmities, it was in many respects so similar to what she had herself experienced, that she could well help and advise her. She felt grateful to her Heavenly Father for giving her this new object of interest and of hopeful exertion. And while she enjoyed Hester's companionship greatly,

she was constantly on the watch for opportunities of being useful to her, of endeavouring to show her her own defects, and to lead her to desire to attain to a more gentle, charitable spirit.

One day when Margaret was at the manse, Hester came in with a message to Mrs. Stewart. As her mother had desired her to go on to call at Auchenbeith, she gladly accompanied Margaret home. They discussed the working society plan, and Hester discovered that Margaret's opinion of it was much the same as her own.

"Why do you join in it, then?" she asked bluntly. "Why join in it if you think it wrong?"

"But I don't think it wrong; I only think it a little foolish, and by no means likely to answer the end proposed. I do not think we shall accomplish much work."

"Then it is a waste of time. Why spend so many hours upon occupations you think useless?"

"I don't think them useless," was the quiet answer.

"They must be useless if they don't at all answer the end proposed."

"And what is the end proposed?"

"Why, to make clothes for the poor people who want them, to be sure."

"That is the end the others propose; but it is not mine. My aim is gradually to interest these young ladies in the wants and circumstances of the poor, so that they may be willing to exert themselves in their behalf, in more useful, though perhaps less amusing

plans. I should never have proposed this plan, but as they have done so themselves, I am quite willing to please them by joining in it, and shall not think my time wasted if I can lead them, even in a small degree, to concern themselves more about their poor and suffering brethren."

"I wonder," said Hester hesitatingly, "whether you would be offended if I were to tell you what is in my mind just now."

"I should try not to be," answered Margaret, with a smile, "and I think I may promise I shall not."

"Well, then, when I first saw you that day at Saintsel, I thought I should like you very much; and," with an arch glance, "perhaps I have not been disappointed. But you did disappoint me that day. I thought it was not quite straightforward and sincere to humour all the nonsense and folly of these girls as you did."

"I cannot at all remember saying anything that was not quite sincere," was Margaret's calm answer. "If you remember an instance where I expressed anything which you had reason to know I did not quite think, I should like you to tell me."

"Perhaps not. But at least you concealed thoughts and feelings which I am sure you must have felt."

"And was there any good reason why I should express them?" asked Margaret, in the same calm tone.

"Yes," said Hester quickly; "to show your sincerity, to teach these girls that you are not afraid of speaking the truth."

"Well," said Margaret in the tone of one who thinks aloud, "perhaps that would be the easiest plan."

"Easiest plan! What do you mean?"

"If it be necessary to show off our sincerity, there are two ways of doing it, and I think yours is the easiest. The other is to be constantly and earnestly consistent in our straightforwardness, speaking the truth with the most unwavering constancy, whatever it may cost us, weighing our every word lest we should at any time say, or seem to say, anything that is not perfectly true, and expressing our opinions boldly, however humiliating the expression may be. But that is very difficult. It requires such constant watchfulness, and calls upon us so often to condemn ourselves, and to lower ourselves in the estimation of others. To speak out bluntly and harshly our condemnation of the opinions and conduct of one whom we despise or dislike, is easy. The difficulty in that case is to make quite sure that we are acting from a single-hearted desire to keep God's commandment—to speak the truth, and not from the wish to gratify our own irritability of temper or feeling."

Hester blushed deeply. She felt the implied rebuke. She felt that her truth-speaking was often caused by irritability. After an awkward pause she said—

"But, Margaret, we can be insincere by seeming to feel what we do not, as well as by saying what we do not think."

"Most certainly we can."

"And while I know you must have felt contempt for the ostentation of one, the servility of another, the" —

"Stop," interrupted Margaret gravely, "one illustration is as good as twenty."

Again a conscious blush spread over Hester's countenance, and she continued in a more softened tone—

"But while you must have felt contempt and dislike, you showed only patience and kindness."

"Patience and kindness for servility and ostentation, Hester! I do not think I did that."

"For the ostentatious and servile, at least," said Hester impatiently.

"Yes; but in so doing I affected no feeling I did not really experience. If by kindness is meant a desire to make others comfortable and happy, and by patience a desire not to get angry and provoked by their folly or faults, I can safely say I had these feelings."

"I cannot separate between the offence and the offender," rejoined Hester with the same impatience.

"But, Hester, dear Hester," said Margaret, solemnly and affectionately, "what would become of us did not our Lord and Saviour separate between the sin and the sinner?"

"True; I did not think. I am wrong, very wrong," said Hester, in a tone of deep feeling.

"This question seems to me to be at the root of many of our difficulties in the way of doing our duty to our neighbours. It is right to hate the sin, but it is also right to feel the tenderest compassion, the most active

kindness, for the sinner. I remember Norah once said to me on this subject,—'Try to remember that each person you meet with is either the friend or the enemy of your blessed Saviour, and you will have little difficulty in teaching yourself to look upon them with interest and sympathy.' If they be the friends, dear Hester, we shall find it easy to bear with them patiently, to seek in all love and tenderness to help them to overcome those faults so dishonouring to God, so deeply painful to themselves. If enemies—ah, what words can tell the tender pity with which we ought to think upon their terrible condition!"

There was a few minutes' silence. Both were deeply moved. At last Hester said earnestly—

"Thank you, Margaret, that will do me good. Dr. Stewart always tells me that I judge and feel too uncharitably. Surely such a solemn thought must drive away all uncharitableness, and hard, intolerant judgments."

"I can well sympathize with you, Hester, in your efforts to overcome this tendency to intolerance. I have fought many a hard battle with it."

"You, Margaret?"

"Yes, I have indeed." And she told her of her difficulties in this way upon her first going to school, and of the method she had adopted to cure herself. Hester listened with much interest, and declared her determination to try Margaret's plan.

"One thing it taught me," said Margaret, "was that the more I forgot the little words 'I' and 'me,' the easier

my task became. Weigh with the utmost care the nature and extent of any duty before you, and dwell upon the motives which ought to excite you to it; but forget the 'I' who is to do it. Consider earnestly the circumstances, the wants, and feelings of those towards whom your kindness and courtesy may be called for, but forget altogether the 'I' who is to be kind and courteous. Don't think about showing yourself kind, neither, Hester, think about showing yourself sincere."

"Ah," said Hester blushing, "I do that pretty often."

"I think you do," was Margaret's frank answer, "and by doing so impair the very sincerity you wish to preserve. Your mind is so full of the desire to prove that you are not afraid to speak the truth, that you forget to consider whether it really be truth you speak. To say a harsh thing merely to show how straightforward you are, is to be rude and disagreeable, but it is scarcely straightforward."

Hester looked half offended. So greatly did she pride herself on her sincerity, that she could scarcely bear to acknowledge even to herself that Margaret was right. And she hastily recurred to a former part of the conversation.

"We must attend then to our feelings, and correct them first, in order that our conduct may be both sincere and kind at the same time."

"Not in order to anything," said Margaret quickly. "I don't at all like that system of making present feelings and present duties a sort of stepping-stone to future

benefits. We must love our neighbours as ourselves, because our Lord commands us to do so. We must be kind to him, because our Lord bids us be so. Our love and kindness will work good for him and good for us, but we have nothing to do with the consequences. If we think too much of them we shall be discouraged every time we fail of effecting the good we wish, and the right feelings will be checked and blighted because they have not brought forth the fruit we expected. But if we cultivate them for their own sakes in order to please our Father in Heaven, successful or unsuccessful, useful or useless, they are equally blessed."

Hester was not at one talk quite convinced of the truth of all Margaret's doctrines upon the subject of her intercourse with her neighbours. But by slow degrees, her maxims of love and tenderness worked their way into her heart, and counterbalanced the narrow prejudices, the harsh judgments, she had learned from her mother. And Margaret rejoiced as she saw in Hester a new field of labour, and one which was in some respects more promising than the others given her in her cousins.

The working society preserved a lingering and sickly existence for a few months, and then died a natural death; but not before it had awakened in Rose and Anna a desire to be of use, a desire which Margaret took care to cherish and encourage in every way in her power, while she also sought carefully to lead them to see the taint of self-seeking, self-exaltation, with which it was marred, and to endeavour to remove it.

CHAPTER VIII.

ARTHUR.

But while Margaret was thus busily and happily engaged in her work appointed, and in labouring for the good of all the young people among whom she had been thrown, a heavy trial was preparing for her.

She had for some months felt a little uneasy about Arthur. His own letters were as cheerful, she thought more cheerful than usual. But the Baileys wrote that they did not think him very well. He was weak and languid, and seemed very much oppressed with the heat of the weather, which had been unusually great. Latterly they had mentioned their intention of leaving home for a short time, as soon as Mr. Bailey could get any one to undertake his duties during his absence, and they hoped change of scene and a more bracing air might revive him. They had even serious thoughts of bringing him to Scotland to see Margaret, and she, poor girl, had been rejoicing in the prospect.

In the first week of July, she received a letter from Mrs. Bailey. They had made all their arrangements for leaving home, and were just going to set out, when

Arthur caught cold, which must delay their journey for a few days. He was rather feverish, and she had persuaded him not to write himself this time, but he or Mrs. Bailey would write in a day or two.

Margaret was uneasy but not alarmed. Arthur was always feverish when he was at all unwell, however slight his ailments might be. And Mrs. Bailey spoke of only a few days' delay. She looked impatiently, but scarcely anxiously, for the promised letter.

But day passed after day and no letter came, and Margaret grew very unhappy. The post-office was in the village two miles off, and the people there were not at all regular in sending up the letters. But no day passed in which some of the servants, or of the family, were not at the village, and they always called for them.

One day, after more than a week had elapsed, Margaret and Rose were going down to the village, when they met Hester coming from it. She ran to meet them.

"What will you give me for this, Margaret?" she cried gaily, holding up a letter. "I called for our letters, and when I saw this one to you, I could not resist the pleasure of bringing it to" ——

But she was interrupted by a groan from Margaret, who had hastily torn open the letter whilst she was speaking. Both girls anxiously asked what was wrong.

"He is dying," she said, turning upon them, for one instant, a face full of unutterable wo, then crushing the letter in her hand, she walked on with long, rapid strides.

The girls looked at one another.

"Poor Margaret!" said Rose, "but she must go home. Where is she going?"

"She does not know. She does not think," answered Hester sadly.

They ran after her. Rose put her hand gently on her arm, and said in a tone of unusual softness—

"Dear Margaret, you will come home, will you not? You will wish to go to him at once, and you must come home first."

Margaret, as if mechanically, obeyed the impulse of Rose's touch. She turned, and began retracing her steps with the same unconscious, aimless rapidity, but without speaking. The girls followed her; this speechless grief alarmed them, and they held a whispered consultation about her.

"If she would but speak or cry," they said, as they again overtook her, and asked her if she could not tell them more. She put the letter into their hands. They read it together. Sanguine as people of their age usually are, they saw at once from its tone that there was no hope, that Arthur was indeed dying as Margaret had said. But it contained no particulars, referring to some letter which Margaret ought to have received a week ago, and which had evidently contained a summons to her to go to Devonshire; as this one expressed some alarm at her non-appearance, and a strong hope that she might even then be on the road.

This was a bitter aggravation of the trial, but Mar-

garet had glanced so hastily over the letter, and seemed so overwhelmed with the idea of Arthur's danger, that the girls hoped she had not read or understood this part. They were mistaken. Margaret did not speak a word until they reached the house, then turning to Rose she said in a hoarse, but calm voice—

"I must go at once, will you manage it for me, dear? Will you tell your papa and mamma I can see no one? And, Rose, dear, will you ask the servants if any one got a letter for me last week, and forgot to give it me? It would be a comfort to know all."

She seemed scarcely to hear Rose's ready promise, but going quickly up stairs, she went straight to her own room. Hester followed her immediately. She found her standing in the middle of the room, her hand pressed to her forehead, with the air of one who was trying to recollect what she had to do. Hester went up to her, and taking her hand led her unresistingly to a chair. She made her sit down, untied her bonnet, opened the window, and placed a glass of water beside her, then saying soothingly—

"Sit still, dear Margaret, I will pack your things for you," she turned from her, and began to busy herself in laying out such articles of clothing as she thought necessary, hoping that when Rose came, she might be able to find something to put them in, without disturbing Margaret with questions.

In a few minutes there was a gentle tap at the door. Hester went to open it. It was Jessie, with a face so

full of deep concern, that Hester was startled even at that moment. She would have advised her not to come in, but Jessie pushed her hastily aside, and went hurriedly up to Margaret.

"Oh, Margaret, Margaret," she cried, throwing her arms round her neck," can you ever forgive me? It was I who got the letter last Wednesday, and forgot to give it to you."

"The letter, the letter," was all Margaret could say.

Jessie put it into her trembling hands. It was from Mr. Bailey, written two days after the first intimation of Arthur's illness. He had been taken suddenly and most alarmingly worse that morning, and Mr. Bailey begged Margaret to lose no time in coming to them, saying that Arthur had taken a terrible longing to see her.

As she read these last words, the letter fell from her hands, she closed her eyes as if to shut them out, but they seemed to write themselves upon her heart. A terrible longing to see her! and she not there.

The girls had been watching her with great anxiety. Jessie would have spoken before to beg again for her forgiveness, but Hester had prevented her.

"Don't you see," she whispered sternly, "that she can have no thought for you. Her heart is full of him."

But now Jessie would be no longer restrained. She threw herself upon her knees before her, seized one of her hands, and covered it with tears and kisses, sobbing out—

"Oh, Margaret, dear, kind Margaret, can you never, never forgive me?"

Margaret started, shivered as if with cold, passed the other hand hurriedly over her forehead, and saying in a voice of intense misery—"Oh, my Father, help me," she burst into tears.

Jessie would have risen and tried to soothe her, but Hester laid her hand heavily upon her shoulder, and whispered to her to be quite still and let her cry.

Her tears did not last long, but as Hester had hoped, they did her good. When she looked up again her countenance wore an expression of even deeper sadness, but it had lost the calm, rigid look, that had so alarmed the girls. She seemed for a moment bewildered when Jessie repeated her fear that she could never forgive her, but quickly recollecting herself, she bent down, kissed her kindly, and said in her own gentle voice—

"Yes, dear, I forgive you altogether. You had not heard me ask about letters. You did not know how anxious I was."

"No, indeed, indeed, I did not," interrupted Jessie. "But, dear Margaret, this will be a lesson to me. I promise you solemnly, to think more seriously of the evils of my thoughtlessness."

"Thank you, dear, that promise comforts me even now," said Margaret, again kissing her.

Rose came in carrying a tray with cold meat and wine. Margaret turned from it in disgust, but the affectionate entreaties of the girls prevailed with her

to eat a few morsels, in order, as they said, that she might be the better able to go on in her journey without stopping. Hester and Rose showed the kindest consideration for her in every way. Rose went herself to seek a carpet bag, and when they had filled it, she and Hester carried it down stairs, so that Margaret might not be disturbed by the servant coming for it.

In far less time than she could have expected, the carriage was heard coming round to the door, and Rose came to tell her all was ready. Even at that moment, she remembered to leave a message for Anna who was not at home, and to say in a low tone to Hester—

"Be kind to poor Jessie, and keep Rose from teasing her if you can; teach her to get good out of this sorrow. But, dear Hester, do it tenderly."

Mr. Cecil was at the door to hand her into the carriage, and to her surprise, stepped in after her. She would have remonstrated, but he would not listen.

"I am your father just now, my dear child," he said, "and I cannot suffer you to go away alone. I shall see you safely off; and Martha shall go with you all the way. Don't try to speak to me. Forget I am here. Lean back in the corner. Sometimes a sudden and overwhelming sorrow produces a kind of torpor which induces sleep. If you can sleep, dear, it will make the journey seem less tedious."

Margaret did not sleep, but she was glad to close her eyes to shut out the bright sunshine. They drove

very rapidly, and reached Edinburgh in time for a train starting at six. They were at the railway station about ten minutes before the hour, so that Mr. Cecil had time to write down particular directions for Martha, about the different lines of railway they must travel by.

Martha was excellently adapted for the service now laid upon her. She had been a great many years with the Cecils, first as nursery-maid, now as attendant on the young ladies. She was a shrewd, sensible woman, with a great deal of kindness and delicacy of feeling. She watched over Margaret with most unwearied and judicious care. Quietly and unostentatiously getting her refreshments when she thought it necessary, guarding her from all discomfort and annoyance, without tormenting her with a fidgety, fussing attention, and taking upon herself to answer all the attempts at conversation made by their fellow-passengers.

They were detained at one place, where they had to change from one line to another, so that it was late on the second night, or rather early in the morning, when they reached their destination.

Mr. Bailey had seen the carriage coming up the road, and was at the door ready to receive them.

"He will be so glad to see you, dear," was all he said, as he led her into a room on the ground-floor.

"Thank God he is still alive," she exclaimed, bursting into tears.

Martha met Mr. Bailey as he was going up stairs

to prepare Arthur to receive his sister, and represented to him with much earnestness, that Margaret ought to go to bed for an hour or two, as she had not slept for two nights. Mr. Bailey shook his head.

"There is no time for that," he said mournfully. "In an hour or two all will be over; she has only come to see him die."

Arthur had been so very anxious to see Margaret, that they almost dreaded the effect the announcement of her arrival might have upon him. But he received it with a quiet, composed thankfulness, and, instead of being the worse of it, he even seemed to rally a little, and lived for nearly four-and-twenty hours.

Margaret never left his bedside until all was over. She often afterwards looked back upon that day with wonder and gratitude. She was able to meet him with perfect calmness, to converse with him upon the subject of his death, to hear his last wishes, and to minister to all his wants as quietly, as composedly, as if she had been with him through his whole illness, and had long looked forward to, and prepared herself for, the end of all.

One great mercy was vouchsafed to them, in his perfect consciousness, his almost entire freedom from suffering, to the very last, and in the quiet peacefulness of his mind. Although timid and desponding in earthly things, his spiritual life had for the last few years been singularly free from doubts and fears; his faith was so simple and child-like, his trusting confidence upon his

Saviour so constant and humble. He now told them, that he had for years felt sure he would die young.

"I often thought my death would be sudden," he said, "and I earnestly wished for that. I had no fear of death, for I knew my Saviour would carry me on His bosom through the dark valley. I was not afraid of what was to come after death, for I know He has paid *all* my debts, His blood hath washed out *all* my sins, and His righteousness will cover and hide *all* my imperfections. But I was afraid of a dying bed. I was afraid that Satan might then harass me, and I therefore wished that my death might be sudden. I had forgotten, you see, that He in whom I am complete is the head of *all* principality and power. But He has taught me to leave my peace and comfort in His hands, as I have long ago placed the salvation of my soul there."

He sent a message to Norah.

"Tell her, dear Margaret," he said, "that her poor, weak, timid boy, died in perfect peace, because the Lord had taught him that Arthur Cecil is nothing, and Christ is all in all. I did wish very much to see her again. But," he added with a bright smile, "I shall soon be where I shall miss no one."

He was so weak that he was able to speak little, and all he said was addressed to Margaret. Mr. and Mrs. Bailey remained in the room almost all the time, and so did the two young men, who had been sent for at the same time that the unfortunate letter to Mar-

garet had been written. None of them could bear to be long away from him; but except a word of affection and gratitude now and then, he did not speak to them.

"I bade my loving father and mother, and my dear brothers farewell last night," he said, "for I never thought to see another sun rise. And I am glad I did so, that I may now give all my strength to this dearest sister."

He endeavoured to comfort her for his loss, representing to her, that with his weak body and sensitive mind, life could never have been very bright to him.

"I know, darling," he said, "how you have planned for me. I know how you have rejoiced in the thought of labouring for me, of devoting your whole life to my happiness. But, dearest, your Lord wished your service and labour to be given to Him, and He has taken me from you, so that you may be more free to spend, and be spent, in your Lord's service."

He often expressed his thankfulness that he had been spared to see her once more, and that they had been allowed such a calm, happy time together. Margaret's composure lasted till the very end. About four o'clock in the morning after she had arrived, he died with his head resting upon her shoulder. She, Mr. Bailey, and Frederick, were alone with him at the time. He had spoken a word or two, and smiled upon them, only a minute or two before; and at first Margaret could not believe all was over. When she saw it was really so, she quietly kissed his forehead, herself closed his eyes,

and then suffered Mr. Bailey to lead her to ner own room. Her body seemed so completely worn out, that all feeling was for the time deadened. She suffered Martha, who was waiting for her in her room, to undress her, and put her to bed, and she fell asleep immediately, and slept for hours without stirring.

When she awoke, Mrs. Bailey was sitting beside her. She pressed her to take some nourishment. Margaret complied with a strange kind of apathy, that alarmed her kind friend, and then again sank into a heavy sleep.

It was quite evening before she awoke thoroughly, and she then found herself alone. Her mind was now quite clear, and for the first time she felt all the bitterness of her trial. An earnest longing to see him again took possession of her, and with a sort of vague fear that if Mrs. Bailey or Martha were returned, they might wish her to delay going into his room until the next day, she rose hastily, and putting on some clothes, went at once.

She met no one as she quickly traversed the passages, and there was no one in the room. He lay there alone, looking so calm, so happy, that Margaret's long dried up tears at once found vent as she gazed upon him.

"Arthur, Arthur, my own, my only one," she cried aloud in a voice of agony, "you are gone, and have left me alone, alone, Arthur, alone."

And sinking upon her knees before the bed, she

pressed her burning forehead against it, wailing out in a lower, sadder key, "Alone, Arthur, alone."

Her mind had been so occupied, that she had not noticed that there was a kind of bustle down stairs, as she passed along between her own room and Arthur's. She had not heard the door open softly just a moment after she had closed it, she was not aware that any one stood beside her, until a voice which thrilled to her very heart, said—

"Margaret, my own Margaret, my darling child."

She started to her feet, turned round, saw her own Norah, and threw herself into her arms with a wild cry of—"Not alone, oh, not alone."

After a long and silent embrace, Norah said gently—

"You will come away with me, darling."

"But you will bring me back to him, Norah? You will not let them take him away without my seeing him again?" she asked wildly.

"No, no, dear, I will bring you back whenever you wish, but you will come away now. You tremble so, darling, you cannot stand."

And Norah half led, half carried her out of the room. Margaret pointed out her own apartment, and suffered Norah to take her to it, and to lay her again on her bed. She lay for some time without speaking, her hand clasped in Norah's, her eyes closed, and the tears slowly running down her cheeks. Norah thanked God in her heart for those quiet tears. But Margaret could

not long remain absorbed in her own feelings. She soon began to recollect that Norah too was sorrowing.

"My poor Norah," she said, looking fondly on her, "and you were too late?"

"Yes, dear; I did very much wish to bid him farewell; but it was the Lord who ordered it all."

"Oh, yes," said Margaret fervently. "And it was the Lord who sent you to me at that time. Who is there in the whole world who could have been to me what you were at that moment, when my heart felt breaking at its own dreariness, when the wide, wide world seemed to spread itself before me, with all its thousands upon thousands of happy families, and my only one, my all, lay there, cold and dead? And I saw a long, long life, with all its bustle and its business, its labour and its sorrow, and I alone, alone. Oh, Norah, the world of bitterness in that one word," and she paused for a moment, unable to proceed.

"And then, just then, when I most needed you, you came, and I heard your voice, and I saw your eye of love, and I nestled in your arms as a bird in its nest, and I felt I was not alone." And, as if unconsciously, she pressed closer to that loving breast, and put Norah's arm round her neck.

"And, darling, you will soon feel that you were never alone; that there was One standing beside you whose heart is full of tender love and sympathy, that His eye of love was upon you, His arms around you."

"And I forgot Him. Ah, Norah! and that after

I had seen His tender loving-kindness to my precious Arthur," and the tears again filled her eyes.

After a little, she began to tell Norah of the peace and joy of Arthur's death, and of the messages he had sent to her, to Philippe, and Pierre. And then she had to hear how Norah happened to come exactly at that time. In the overwhelming joy of seeing her, and having her beside her, she had till now forgotten to wonder how she came to be there.

It was easily explained. Norah had been for some time so uneasy from the accounts she received of Arthur, that she had been quietly making arrangements to come over to England to see him. She had never mentioned her intention to Arthur or Margaret, lest anything might occur to disappoint it; but a letter she had received from Mr. Bailey about a month before this, had so much increased her alarm, that she had set off as soon as possible. She had gone straight to London, where Miss Bailey, who was now married, lived, and hearing from her of Arthur's dangerous state, she had come down to Devonshire at once, not waiting even to write to prepare them to receive her.

It was her arrival that had summoned Mrs. Bailey from her watch by Margaret's bedside. When Norah heard that Margaret was sleeping, she asked to be taken to Arthur's room. Mrs. Bailey had accompanied her to the door, but at her request, left her to go in alone. She would then have returned to Margaret, but hearing no sound when she listened at the door of the

room, she hoped that the poor girl still slept, and feared to arouse her; she had therefore gone down stairs to await Norah's return. When this was delayed so much longer than she expected, she again went softly up to Margaret's room, and was much surprised to find Norah and Margaret together. While listening to Norah's account of their meeting, she gazed anxiously upon Margaret's flushed face and bright feverish eye, and she tried earnestly to persuade her not to return to Arthur's room that night. But Margaret's heart was set upon it, and Norah was inclined to think it might do her good.

"I am quite calm now, dear, kind, Mrs. Bailey," said Margaret pleadingly, "and, indeed, the fever of my heart will not be better till I have seen him once more."

"Don't try to be too calm, dear," said Norah anxiously, "that is what hurts you. But it is sweet and soothing, Margaret, to see how beautifully peaceful he is."

And Margaret found that it was soothing to look upon his calm, beautiful face, with Norah to support her, with Norah's arms around her; with the feeling that Norah shared every thought, every emotion, as they arose in her heart, she felt that it did her good to stand there and gaze upon him, and think where he was now, and what untold happiness he was enjoying.

She returned to her own room calm and composed, but it was now a natural calmness and composure, not the terrible apathy of an overburdened heart.

Nothing could exceed the affectionate kindness of the Baileys to her. They had always loved her, but now their common sorrow in Arthur's death bound them more closely together, and they were pained to think of parting with her.

When she was able to think about her plans for the future, they pressed her to become to them what Arthur had been, to live with them as their child now, and allow them to provide for her as their child hereafter.

It was a tempting proposal. Margaret felt strongly drawn to them from their love to her dear Arthur. It was painful to part with all who had ever known and valued him, to go away from those who mourned his loss almost as deeply as she could, and to dwell where his name was a strange word, where none knew what he had been, how much she had lost. And the quiet parsonage, with all its love, gentleness, and peace, presented a tempting contrast to the little jarrings and discords which too often prevailed at Auchenbeith.

But she did not hesitate long. Mr. and Mrs. Cecil had offered her a home when she most needed one, and she felt that gratitude required her to stay with them, at least until they got some one to supply her place; and that she knew well could not be soon found. She knew that she exactly suited them, that she was of considerable use to Mrs. Cecil, and that none of the girls could get on well with a regular governess. Altogether, she felt that God had in His providence pointed out this sphere of usefulness to her, and

though she did not feel it to be a very hopeful one, still it was her duty to return to it.

The Baileys, though much disappointed, were forced to acknowledge that she was right, and Norah gave her fullest, most decided approbation to her decision.

"I will not, I cannot say, that I return with much pleasure to my work," said Margaret, when she and Norah were discussing the matter one day. "It is not of a hopeful, promising kind. It seems to call for great exertion, and promises but little fruit. There is little in the work itself to cheer or encourage me."

"Then, dear," said Norah in her own earnest, hearty way, "you must take all your strength and energy from the thought that it is the Lord who sends you to the work; if you have little success or little prospect of success to encourage you, you have at least this assurance, that the Lord is working with you, and stands by your right hand to help you. To do His work for His sake is a blessing in itself, and a blessing that is not lessened by our want of success."

"I feel," said Margaret thoughtfully, "that I needed to learn this lesson. As dear Arthur said, I have always rejoiced in the thought of labour, of self-sacrifice, of suffering for the sake of those I love; and in order that I may add to their happiness, now I must learn to turn that readiness to work, and to suffer, with which God has blessed me, to His service, and be willing that He should use it exactly as He sees fit."

"Yes, dear, the Lord has blessed you in giving you

a great readiness, a great energy for all labour, and now He is equally blessing you, in teaching you to put yourself simply and like a little child in His hands, to go on cheerfully and quietly, doing to-day what He gives you to do, even although you see little good in it, little good from it."

"If I could but remember that it is a blessing to be taught this, for oh, Norah, it is a painful lesson. Oh, it is hard, hard, to be patient and submissive when I see all the purposes, all the objects of my life, laid prostrate in the dust."

"All *your* purposes, all *your* objects, dear, but not the Lord's. His purposes must stand. And you know, dear, that His purposes are all best."

"I know that all you say is right, but it is difficult to feel it," Margaret said still sadly. "You have so often told me, I have so long known of myself, that mine is a stirring, active, resolute spirit. I have so long seen that the effect of all your teaching and training, and of all the discipline of circumstances in which I have been placed, has been to strengthen this resolute spirit, and I have so long believed that He who gave the natural character, and the training, and the discipline, would also give the use for it all"——

"And so most assuredly He will, He does," interrupted Norah earnestly.

"But it is so difficult to see it as I am now placed. I cannot but be conscious of possessing considerable powers of mind, and I have so looked forward to using them.

When I have felt my spirit rise as difficulties and trials rose around me; when I have felt my determination to succeed in any work increased with every failure, I have often thought that the Lord had given me great power to do and to suffer, and that, therefore, He intended to call me to some high and exalted work. But, on the contrary, what is appointed me seems more than usually poor and trifling."

"To serve the Lord as He appoints must ever be a high and exalted work," said Norah reprovingly.

"Ah yes, my heart tells me you are right, dear, faithful mother; only my reason rises against it, and my imagination, my taste, earnestly desire something more difficult, something greater than is before me."

"To set ourselves earnestly, resolutely, and patiently to do exactly what the Lord gives us to do, to teach ourselves to submit wholly to Him, to say from the heart, 'Thy will be done,' is a difficult enough task, a great, a high enough work for any one, dear, a task upon which all the powers of the finest mind may be exercised."

"Ah, Norah," said Margaret earnestly and humbly, "never till now have I felt how hard it is to say, 'Thy will be done.' I have often used the prayer when my only wish was for such a measure of acquiescence in God's will, as should restore to me my own peace, which had been disturbed by the rebellious risings of my heart against His dealings. But in this trial, He has taught me to see how little I have of a real, earnest desire, that His will should be done because it is His will,

and He has taught me to pray for that spirit with an earnestness I have never known before."

"And then, dear," said Norah cheeringly, "does not it look like an answer to prayer when He is placing you in a situation where you must exercise that submissive spirit every hour of the day, by having so many little daily and hourly trials of temper to bear, and by having so many petty duties pressing upon you, none of which are very interesting or very much to your taste? To bear these trials, to do these duties aright, will require all the steady, resolute perseverance you have acquired or can acquire, and will require it all the more because there is no interest or excitement in the duties themselves."

"I should remember, too," said Margaret, more hopefully, "that the great lesson you have always tried to teach me was, 'Whatsoever ye do, do it to the Lord.' And as I said before, in almost no circumstances could that lesson be better learned than in those I am placed in."

"Yes, that must ever be the sum of the whole matter, dear. We are to do what the Lord commands, and *because* He commands it. And if that be our aim, it does not very much signify what our work may be. It is the Lord who has appointed it; it is to Him we do it; and it is He who enables us to do it."

"I certainly have full scope for the exercise of patient perseverance," said Margaret smiling a few minutes after this. "In my attempts to improve the character

of my cousins, I try plan after plan, and as yet I cannot say any have very well succeeded. I often think of olden times, when Pierre once told me that I could not sweep a room because I did not know how to hold my brush, and I said I could at least try every plan, and then I must surely find the right one some time. The spirit of that answer was taught me by you, dear Norah, and you can scarcely imagine how often I find a use for it."

Margaret remained with the Baileys till the beginning of September. Miss Bailey, or rather I should say Mrs. Blake, was with them part of the time, and Margaret and Norah returned to London with her, and paid her a short visit. Margaret enjoyed being with her again very much, and was delighted to introduce Norah to her good friends, the Misses Beville. Margaret returned to Auchenbeith before the middle of September; and Norah went to Ireland to see her friends there, promising to visit Margaret in Scotland before she returned home.

CHAPTER IX.

RETURN TO AUCHENBEITH.

Margaret had not felt the full bitterness of her trial until she returned to Auchenbeith to her old labours, difficulties, and vexations. She had not before been aware how much she had been supported under these vexations by the hope, vague as it was, of some day leaving them all, and going to enjoy peace and happiness with her own Arthur. How much strength to do and suffer she had derived from the devoted affection her heart bore to him! Now, when all this was gone, when the continuance of her present mode of life was all she had to look forward to, she learned what it was to have no strength but in the Lord.

She found it at first very difficult to take her old part in the plans and amusements of her young friends with her old cheerfulness and animation. But she made a vigorous effort to do so, feeling that she had no right to cloud her pupils' happiness and sunshine by her sorrow; a sorrow in which it was not natural that they should share. And she was the more anxious not to do so, now that Hugh and John were at home.

At first she thought her situation more irksome and discouraging than ever. She was cheered and comforted by the real joy and affection with which her cousins welcomed her, by the kindness and cordiality of Mr. and Mrs. Cecil, by the consideration they showed for her feelings in guarding her as much as possible from all kinds of annoyance, and in taking care that she should not be forced to join more than she liked in the amusements of the young people.

Still in spite of all these alleviations she was at first discouraged. She was inclined to think that her pupils were not improved, that many of their little faults had gained new life and strength in her absence, the presence of the boys seemed to have added a new element of discord to those previously existing; and yet they were fine boys.

Hugh might perhaps think himself a young man, for he was nearly sixteen. He was clever, had a great deal of good sense, and of good, kind feeling. But his natural temper was a little like Rose's, he was dictatorial and apt to be sullen. It was a softened likeness however, for contact with other boys had rubbed down his natural asperities, and taught him to keep his temper in check. And had Rose not irritated him by her constant determination to have her own way, by her decided manner of expressing that determination, with the air of one who must be in the right, his evil tendencies might not perhaps have shown themselves, and at any rate, could not have worked so much discomfort

to all concerned, as in actual circumstances they did. Then Jessie and he did not agree. He was a studious boy, fond of trying little scientific experiments, and he had no patience for the mischief her carelessness often did him during his nice operations of this kind.

Then John, who was three years younger, was like Jessie, thoughtless and forgetful. He was not so provokingly indifferent about the consequences of his carelessness, but being a boy he was perhaps more disagreeable than she was. He excited Anna's fretfulness and complaints by his boisterousness and noise. And, in short, all three sisters seemed to Margaret to have met with new incentives and provocations to their different foibles.

But it was only at first that she was thus discouraged. She soon began to see promising symptoms in all. Anna had more reason for her complaints, while her complaints were actually fewer. Jessie, with John to help and excite her, did certainly commit a great many very provoking offences, but as she herself told Margaret, she was slowly learning to be sorry for them, and that was at least a step.

But in Rose there was the greatest change, and Margaret was puzzled to make out its nature and extent; puzzled to know whether it were an improvement or not. Sometimes her manner was softened and almost humble, at other times harsher than ever, and with a fretfulness and irritation which was opposed to her former cold dignity. She often looked sad and

depressed, but seemed carefully to avoid confiding to Margaret any cause for this sadness.

One such cause Jessie revealed in her usual careless, teasing way, laughing often at Rose for the mistake her penetration had committed in her estimate of Emma Percival. Rose indignantly denied having changed her opinion of Emma at all; but Anna told Margaret that she was sure Rose had been disappointed in her For weeks after they first became acquainted, Emma had seemed to think no one equal to Rose; Rose's taste was her taste; Rose's favourite studies her favourite studies, and no mode of life could be borne except the quiet, rational, somewhat studious one which Rose's natural inclination led her really to prefer.

But about three weeks after Margaret left them, a certain Lady Louisa came to pay a visit at Saintsel. She was, Anna said, a gay, frivolous girl, who thought of nothing, and spoke of nothing, but London and its gaieties. She was besides very supercilious, and behaved with most cool, contemptuous incivility to all the young Cecils. Of course, Rose was not a girl to bear this quietly. She soon began to assert her own superiority, and an open warfare was waged between them. It was now that, for the first time, they learned the real nature of Emma's friendship. She seemed as much attached to Lady Louisa as she had been to Rose, as anxious to discuss with her the probability of Sir Edward and Lady Percival's consenting to take her to London next spring, as she had ever been to discuss

books and lessons with Rose. And although she never joined in Lady Louisa's scornful treatment of Rose as a mere country girl, she certainly was too much afraid of being herself scorned to be a very strenuous champion.

Margaret was sorry for Rose when she heard this. She could understand how much her proud spirit must be wounded by such treatment, and she gave her credit for a sincere affection for Emma, which must render the disappointment doubly bitter. But although this was in itself a trial severe enough to account for the change in Rose, Margaret soon discovered that it was not the only cause of it. There was some mystery in which Hester M'Leod was concerned, a mystery which was clouding Hester's brow, too, with a deeper sorrow than that which Rose felt; and a mystery which had the effect of drawing these two much more closely together.

Whatever this mystery might be, however, Margaret was not made a sharer in it, and all she could do was to endeavour to soothe Rose's irritability without knowing its cause, to take advantage of the softening that sometimes showed itself, and to make peace as well as she could between Rose and the others.

This last was no easy task. Rose was so positive about the merest trifles. She was very regular in all her habits, and having once laid down a rule, or formed a plan, she could not bear to have it infringed upon. She was a very bad balancer of the relative importance of different duties. Because she had for good reasons decided that the forenoon should be given up to lessons,

she thought that nothing should be allowed to interfere with this arrangement. She could not be made to see that, in some circumstances, stronger reasons might be found for breaking than for keeping the rule. If the boys wished to ride and she to walk, if they proposed one direction and she another, she would argue with Hugh about it for an hour, until both lost their temper, and the whole party were rendered uncomfortable by the equal sullenness of conquered and conqueror.

"It is so absurd, so provoking of Hugh to insist upon going out this forenoon," she said one day to Margaret. "We can never settle to our lessons in the afternoon after such a long walk as he proposes."

"Well, it would be no great loss if for one day we did not settle," answered Margaret pleasantly. "It would not counterbalance the pleasure of having pleased Hugh, and of having prevented him from losing his temper as he did yesterday."

"But why should he lose his temper about such a trifle?"

"Nay, that is his business. Ours is to avoid giving him any occasion for sullenness, and if it be a trifle as you say, it will be easy enough to yield."

"But if we always give way to him, he will grow more and more exacting, and we shall never have any peace."

"You don't know that, Rose. You have never tried the yielding plan yet. The arguing one does not

seem to answer very well. Suppose for to-day we try the other."

"But why should I be the one to yield?"

"Why? Oh, one can easily find reasons for yielding, if one wishes it. Perhaps, because Hugh will not; perhaps, because girls have always to give way to boys; or because he is only a visitor, and you at home."

"Nonsense, Margaret. I am not joking," said Rose angrily.

"But would it not be better to joke about such a trifle, than to be angry about it?"

"It is a trifle to him, but not to me. It is no trifle to be forced to give up all my morning studies for no use."

"Yes, it is a trifle to give them up for one day," persisted Margaret, "when the boys are to be so short a time with us. I know your Papa and Mamma would be quite glad that you should give yourself an entire fortnight's holiday, and devote all your time to them."

"Perhaps so. But I am not of an age to enjoy holidays. When girls come to my age, they either give up study altogether, or carry it on for the pleasure they find in it. A holiday is no great treat to me." And Rose walked off with all the dignity of seventeen.

Margaret was often more successful with Hugh than with Rose. He was more accustomed to yield, more considerate for others, and more candid in confessing himself to be in the wrong.

About a fortnight before the boys returned to school,

Rose slipped her foot in coming down stairs, and sprained her ankle. It was not a very bad sprain, but it prevented her for some days from going out with them, and certainly the peace and harmony of the whole party were greatly increased by this circumstance.

"What a happy day we have had," cried John, one afternoon as they were returning from a long walk. "I do think it is because Rose is not here." He glanced at Margaret as he spoke; she smiled and shook her head.

"Well, Margaret, you may shake your head as you like," said Hugh, "but it is quite true; we get on much more peaceably without Rose to argue and quarrel about everything."

"And is the arguing and quarrelling all Rose's fault?"

"Yes, it is," he answered warmly. "If we want to go east, she determines upon going west, and to propose to go up hill, is the sure way to make her insist upon going down."

"But, Hugh, do you not remember your father's proverb that it takes two to make a quarrel? If a certain person were not as much bent upon going east, as Rose is upon going west, I don't see how the peace of the party could be broken in upon."

"But, then, if I happen to have good reasons for going east, I don't see why I should yield to Rose in all things."

"Because, as you say, you like peace and dislike

quarrels. You cannot force Rose, or any one but your self, to give up argument and yield, but you can always force yourself to do so."

"Ah, Margaret," said Hugh laughing, "you have such a cunning way of coming over people."

"Not cunning, I hope, Hugh. I don't like to be thought cunning."

"Not cunning in a bad sense. But, certainly, Jessie is right when she calls you the peacemaker."

"I should like to be one," said Margaret, seriously and earnestly, "because the Lord has said, 'Blessed are the peacemakers.'"

Hugh looked impressed by her manner, and encouraged by the thoughtful expression of his face, she continued—

"I advised you to give way sometimes for your own sake, because I thought you would enjoy more going west without a dispute, than going east with one. But, dear Hugh, is not this a higher reason, because the Lord promises a blessing to those who make peace?"

"Oh, I could never be a peacemaker, that requires too much tact and patience. To be a peacekeeper, is all I could aspire to."

"But every time you give up your own wishes in order to prevent a quarrel, you are really a peacemaker. And if you do this because the Lord desires us to make and keep peace, you will assuredly receive His blessing."

"And I can be a peacemaker too," cried Jessie laugh-

ing. "Think of that, I shall be a peacemaker the next time I take care not to shake your hand, Hugh, when you are cutting out your little, tiny wheel."

Hugh coloured, and looked vexed, as he remembered the outburst of temper such an accident had produced upon the previous evening. But he presently recovered himself, and said good humouredly—

"And I shall be a peacemaker the next time I run out of the room when such a thing happens, and don't come near you, Jessie, until I have got the better of it."

"And I, when I take care to put away your dictionary, Hugh," said John. "But here is a quiet puss who never quarrels, or makes quarrel. What peace-keeping can you find, Anna?"

"Oh Johnnie, you forget how often I grumble and complain," said Anna, with a blush.

"Yes," said Hugh bluntly, "you used to be rather a grumbler, Anna; but I have heard very few complaints since I came home. Certainly you are one of the peacekeepers already. We only hope to become so."

Anna looked much pleased.

"It is all Margaret's doing," she said, gratefully. "She has taught me that things do not go so very ill with me as I used to think."

"I wish," said Hugh, as they were going into the house, "that Margaret could make peace between Malcolm and Hester M'Leod. It makes me wae, as nurse used to say, to see her sad face. And the worst of it is, it is partly my fault," he muttered, in a lower key.

Margaret could not at the time ask him to what he alluded, and when she reflected upon it afterwards, she thought that she ought not to do so. If Hester wished her to know about it, she would tell her herself, and all she ought to do was to give her an opportunity of speaking to her if she wished it.

Malcolm and Hester spent the following day at Auchenbeith, and in the course of the day, Margaret found the opportunity she sought of being alone with Hester. She thought her looking more melancholy than she had ever seen her, and she determined to open the conversation herself. She and Hester had gone out to the garden after dinner, and as the others were all engaged in the house, they had no interruption to dread.

"You are very melancholy, Hester," said Margaret, putting her arm round her waist, and looking affectionately at her. "From what Hugh told me, I am afraid you and Malcolm have a quarrel. I don't know anything about it, and I have no wish to know more than you choose to tell me. But if you think it would be any comfort to confide in me, you know well you shall have my warmest sympathy. Tell me all, tell me part, or tell me nothing, exactly as you think right. I can quite trust to your confidence in me; and I think, you can quite trust to my love for you."

Hester burst into tears.

"Oh, Margaret," she said, "I am very unhappy. I have been wanting to tell you about it. I have been

afraid you might think me unkind for having a secret from you."

"No, dear, you must not suppose so for one moment. I am not apt to think my friends unkind. I shall not feel in the least degree less assured of your love for me and trust in me, even although you determine to keep the whole matter a secret."

Hester thought for a few minutes, and then said,—

"I don't think I can do wrong in telling you all about it, Margaret, and I am sure it will be a relief to me to do so.

"It is about Malcolm. You have often heard me say, what very dear friends he and I have been. We are very near of an age. He is only about a year older than I, and ever since I can recollect, we have been so much to one another. When we were little children together, we had the same playthings, the same picture books, and he was always by my side to defend me when the other boys teased me, or were too rude for me. Then, when we grew older, we learned the same lessons, we read the same books, we liked the same things. And after he went to school, it was still the same; we wrote such long letters to each other, and told each other everything that interested us, and at every holiday I loved him better, I was more proud of him than before.

"It is that, Margaret, that hurts me so much, that he should be in the wrong, he who was always so good, so gentle, and yet so clever, so brave. Oh, Mar-

garet, I was *so* proud of him. And when any of his school-fellows came to see us, and I saw and heard how much he was loved and admired, I used to feel it was an honour to be Malcolm M'Leod's sister.

"And when first he came home, it was all as it used to be; nay better, I loved him better, I saw more to be proud of. But it did not last long. Two young companions, whose father lives near here, asked Malcolm and Hugh Cecil to spend a couple of days with them. I was very sorry when I heard of it, for they are not nice boys at all, at least I think they are not. At first it was agreed that they were to go, but then it came out that the great amusement was to be rabbit-shooting. Mr. Grainger's property is overrun with rabbits it seems, and he had invited a large party of gentlemen and young lads to have two days' regular work shooting them.

"Mamma and Papa were not afraid for Malcolm, he is such a cool, steady boy; but Mrs. Cecil was terribly alarmed. She could not persuade Hugh to give it up, and she came over to see what Mamma could do.

"Mamma, Mamma—I think," hesitating, "at least I fancy, she wished to show that her son would obey, although Hugh would not yield even to his mother's entreaties, and without thinking how much poor Malcolm would be disappointed, she asked Papa to forbid him to go, and so Papa did, and then Mr. Cecil said Hugh must not go alone.

"They were very angry, both boys, and the tiresome teasing Graingers, made it all worse by laughing at them as misses, and said they were tied to their mother's apron string. And in short, in a moment of passion, they agreed to go without leave.

"They could easily manage it, for Malcolm had always been trusted to ride about the country by himself, and no one asks where he has been. And Hugh had made some excuse, which he said and thought was no lie. Do not think too hardly of them, dear Margaret; they were blinded by passion, because they thought they had been unjustly treated, and they did not at the time see that they were acting a lie.

"Well, Rose and I happened to find it out, and we begged and entreated them to stay at home. But they would not hear us. Rose soon lost her temper, and said she should take no farther trouble in the matter; that if Hugh chose to get himself into a scrape, he might, it was no business of hers.

"But, O Margaret, I could not feel that. It was not the scrape I thought of, although I should have been nearly heart-broken to see Papa angry with my own Malcolm. But it was the sin. How could I let my own brother sin, and not try all means to prevent it?

"I had only one argument left, and I determined to use it whatever it cost me. Margaret, I prayed so long, and oh, so earnestly, to be shown the right and to be enabled to do it, and then I went to seek Malcolm.

"I found him in a spot where we used often to go

when we wanted to have one of our long, quiet talks. It is upon the high bank above the river, near the old elm. Malcolm long ago made a seat there for himself and me, and no one else used ever to go. He was busy making a ramrod for his gun. I spoke and spoke, and begged him with tears to give it up. He would not. Then I said as firmly as I could—

"'Well, Malcolm, if there is no other way to keep you from this sin, I must tell Papa all I know.'

"He stared at me in speechless surprise. He would not at first believe that I could propose such a thing. But when he found that I was firm, he rose, and standing before me he said, O Margaret, in such a voice, with such a look—

"'Hester, say again that you will tell my father, and I must give up my plan; say it again, and I will throw this ramrod into the river; but, Hester, at the same time I throw from me all the love and confidence that has been between us. We can never again be what we have been. So make your choice.'

"I don't know what I said; but it meant that I must do what I thought was right. He dashed the ramrod violently down into the water, and turned away without one word, one look. It fell with a heavy splash which went to my very heart, and, Margaret, since then it has been worse even than I thought. He shuns me, scarcely speaks to me, never asks me to walk with him, never asks me to do anything for him. It was only this morning that he came into the room where

Mamma and I were, and asked Mamma to sew one of the strings of his portfolio for him. He, who used to like me to do everything. And when Mamma said I could do it, he went away pretending not to hear.

"O Margaret, it is hard, very hard, it is so bitter," and Hester again burst into tears.

Margaret was the best comforter and sympathizer possible. She never attempted to make light of a sorrow. She always seemed to understand at once where its chief bitterness lay, and to know at once what could best comfort under it. Her first object now was to assure Hester that she had done right.

"Do you think so? Are you sure of that?" she asked with an eagerness which showed that Margaret had guessed rightly where her greatest difficulty lay.

"Rose and I often talk it all over, and sometimes she says that I had no business to interfere."

"I am quite sure that you are right, dear," said Margaret decidedly. "I don't understand that theory of not interfering. If we can in any way prevent sin in one we love, surely we are bound to do it."

"Ah, Margaret, I feel so very much that it is wrong in Malcolm to go on as he is doing now. That vexes me so much, because I was always so proud of him, thought him so much better than myself, that it makes me very sad now to see him going on doing wrong."

"I am glad, dear Hester, that you feel that," said Margaret affectionately, "it will make your own line of conduct towards him easier."

"Oh, I don't care about the difficulty of it, if I only knew what it should be," she replied eagerly; "but sometimes I feel that I make mistakes though I don't quite know how. When I try to show him how willing I am to be reconciled, it only makes him vexed, and sometimes more proud and distant than before."

"Perhaps because he thinks that you suppose all the blame of the quarrel lies upon him, and he may not yet be ready to admit this. Your line of conduct, dear Hester, will be in one sense easy, because it is so simple and straightforward. But in another sense it will be very difficult, because it must be so self-denying, or rather, self-forgetting. You must forget even that there is any self to deny. All your thoughts must be given to him, to the uncomfortable feelings he must be now enduring, to the sinfulness as well as sorrow of his continuing in that state. You must forget that he has been unkind to you."

"Oh, I don't think of that, indeed I do not. If I can only make him be reconciled to me, that is all I care for."

"Yes, dear; but you must even try to forget for the present this earnest desire for reconciliation, right and natural as it is. That desire may sometimes mislead you, as to how you should behave to him, may make you too humble, too evidently forgiving, and so may cause you to wound his pride before it be quite softened. But if your whole heart and mind be set upon helping him to overcome his sinful feelings, with-

out any thought at all about yourself, or about the sorrow they are causing you, you will then see better how in every case you should act towards him. If you can get this spirit of self-forgetting love, it will teach you the wisdom necessary for guiding your conduct aright. There is no wisdom like the wisdom of love, Hester."

Hester had no time to reply, for John came to call them to tea, but as she was going away at night, she found an opportunity to whisper—

"I feel already, dear Margaret, the strength your hint can give me."

Margaret watched anxiously over Hester during the many occasions when the two families were together, and rejoiced to see how much she was enabled to follow out her advice. Hester often told her that she was making no progress in softening Malcolm, but that she was much happier in herself, that she felt stronger, more hopeful, when all her efforts were directed to the one pure, unselfish end, of helping Malcolm to get right again.

But Margaret thought she could see signs of softening in the boy which Hester did not. She often saw him looking anxiously at her, and often saw him look touched and saddened by her unselfish devotion, her unaffected humility and gentleness.

But the days passed on, and the last had come, and still there was no visible reconciliation. The Cecils spent the last day at the cottage. Margaret was of

the party, and her heart bled for poor Hester when night came, and still Malcolm was as cold, sometimes colder, than ever.

Hester did not trust herself to speak about it; but Margaret saw how much she was feeling, and felt how much was expressed in the long, earnest, sorrowful kiss she gave her as they parted at night.

Next afternoon, Hester came up to Auchenbeith. Margaret was alone in the schoolroom when she came in. Words were not needed to tell that all was right. Joy was expressed in every feature of her face.

"All is right, dear Hester, I see," said Margaret affectionately.

"Right, quite right; and if I had a stronger word I should use it. Can things be better than right, dear Margaret?" was the happy answer. "We are better friends than ever. But I will tell you all if you like if you are not too busy."

Margaret was seldom too busy to share in her friends joys or sorrows; and at her earnest invitation, Hester began her story.

"You saw how sad I was yesterday evening. The last day had come, had gone, and still all was the same. I went up to my own room so sad, O Margaret, so sorrowful. I tried to pray for patience, for comfort, and I found I could pray that he might be led to do right, to be taken out of sin; and that did me good.

"You remember what a lovely moon there was. I stood long at the window looking out upon the lawn,

and thinking of old happy times. One time in particular came before me. Soon after we came here, I had a very bad fever, and was long confined to the house. It was a beautiful summer day when I first got out. Papa carried me in his arms to the lawn, and there Malcolm had been getting everything ready for me. He had carried out a nice, comfortable chair, and set it under the large chestnut-tree, and a footstool, and a little table, and on the table he had put a glass filled with flowers, and a few strawberries which he had gone all over the garden to seek; and he had dressed up the plate of strawberries so prettily with leaves and flowers. Oh, I remembered it all, and his happy looks, and his care of me, and I could not help crying a little.

"Just then I heard a gentle knock at the door, and when I said 'Come in,' some one touched the handle, but did not come in. And then I cried again 'Come in,' and the door opened, and it was Malcolm.

"'Hester,' he said in such a sad voice, 'I cannot go away without telling you how sorry I am'——

"I could not let him go on. I ran to him to tell him—I don't quite know what I told him, I don't know what I said, but he understood me, and we were quite friends again. And then he told me how often he had tried to tell me he was sorry, but could not, his pride would not let him. And he said he had soon, very soon, come to thank me in his heart for what I did, and had so long wished to tell me so; that for a long time it had not been anger that kept him back,

but pride and shame. And then he said that he had got a lesson against pride that he could never forget; that he was now determined to get it out of his heart, because it had made him so cruel to me, had made him go on so long doing what he knew to be wrong. He said that he used formerly to think it a manly fault, if it was a fault at all; but he saw its sinfulness now.

"And then, Margaret, we talked so long about everything. And, oh, it made my very heart full of joy to be able to love and esteem him as I used to do, and to know that at least the sin of anger had been out of his heart long before I knew it."

Margaret sympathized heartily in Hester's happiness. They talked long over the whole affair. Hester had told Malcolm, she said, what Margaret's advice to her had been. And Malcolm had thought it so good, and that he should often find occasion to follow it himself.

"If one can but forget self," he said, "forget even that there is a self to deny, and give one's whole mind to the duty before one, without any by side-thoughts about the self that is to do it, one must find such a strength and simplicity in it, and must get on so bravely."

"And I too must always remember your advice," added Hester, "and whenever I find the good of it, I shall recollect Margaret Cecil, and thank her in my very heart."

Hester and Malcolm did not know how much Margaret required to use her own principle herself. She

was always so cheerful, that none of her companions guessed how irksome her present position in many respects was, how opposed to her natural inclinations.

But Margaret was now receiving the answer to her earnest prayers, the Lord was now enabling her to say from the heart, "Thy will be done." And although she felt all her little trials and discouragements more severely now that she had no happy future with Arthur to look forward to, she also felt a new strength to bear them now that she was learning better to do the work of each day simply and trustingly to the Lord, without concerning herself for the morrow.

CHAPTER X.

ROSE.

And so she went quietly and steadily on her way, day by day seeking daily strength from the Lord, and in that strength day by day taking up her burden of daily duty.

It was impossible that she could have passed through such a bitter sorrow without its leaving traces even upon her outward demeanour, as well as on her innermost spirit. Her cousins felt that she was graver and more thoughtful than formerly, but they saw with surprise that she was even more interested than before in their interests and pursuits. They did not know how intently her heart was set upon their improvement, nor understand how important even mere trifles were in her eyes, so that she could but turn them to their advantage.

They felt her influence, and were unconsciously yielding to it more and more. But they failed to observe, or appreciate the spirit of quiet, patient perseverance in which she laboured for their good, submitting unmurmuringly to disappointment, and setting herself cheerfully to devise new plans as fast as the old ones failed.

But although her young friends failed to remark this, Norah did not when she came to pay her promised visit. Her whole heart was refreshed and gladdened, to see the earnest, active, and yet chastened and patient spirit, in which her darling child was pursuing her daily task; to see her giving her whole energies to her work, employing all the faculties of her fine mind to do perfectly the work the Lord had given her to do, however humble and insignificant it might seem; and bearing with quiet submission the trials and disappointments He sent.

Margaret found it a great advantage to get Norah's sage counsels about her young cousins, for she could scarcely call them her pupils. Norah thought more highly of Anna's character than Margaret did. Margaret loved Anna very dearly, and was very grateful for her tender affection to herself. But she was such an energetic, determined character, that she could not quite sympathize with, or understand, Anna's indolence and timidity. Norah helped her to understand her better, and to see that there was a great deal of earnestness under that weak, timid manner.

She comforted and encouraged her also with respect to Jessie. She thought that Jessie had certainly begun to see the evils of her thoughtlessness, and to feel ashamed of her giddy, trifling character, and there was no doubt that she was clever, had a quick penetration, and could do a great deal in the way of improving herself, when she had once learned her own deficiencies.

Rose was the one in whom Norah felt the least in

terest, and for whom she entertained the least hope; and yet Rose was the one who derived most benefit from Norah's visit.

Rose's self-confidence had been shaken by the mortification of discovering how much she had been deceived in Emma Percival. She had too much good sense not to perceive that Emma's great professions of esteem for herself, had blinded and misled her, and she was humbled to think that it should have been so. A farther mortification was inflicted upon her when she found how small was her influence with Hugh, and when she contrasted her own conduct towards him, with Hester's to Malcolm. She was thus made more capable of seeing and acknowledging that in many things she failed in her duty towards her brothers. Hugh's blunt expression of his opinion of her conduct, irritated her at the moment; but upon after reflection she was often forced to acknowledge its truthfulness, and often wished to improve.

Margaret had told her of the conversation she had held with Hester in the garden, and Rose had felt self-condemned at the thought of Hester's generous self-devotedness; had felt that she could never have acted as Hester had done.

Before the impression which all these things made upon her had passed away, Norah came, and a still deeper impression was made by her serious, earnest, unselfish way of viewing things, and by her simple, straightforward, self forgetting character.

One afternoon, when Norah, Margaret, and Rose were in the schoolroom together, Norah and Margaret began to speak of the difficulty of acting from pure and right motives.

"Yes," said Norah, in her earnest way, "I think we must be both astonished and grieved when we look over the events of each day, and remember not only how many things we have omitted to do, but also how much of what we have done has been done from wrong motives. That word from Malachi—'A son honoureth his father; if then I be a father, where is mine honour?' often comes to my mind at night, and brings self-condemnation to my heart. Of all that we have thought and said, done and felt, through the day, how much can be referred to the love a child should bear to its tender father, how much can stand the question—'Have I done it as to the Lord?'"

Norah and Margaret had forgotten Rose during the conversation, and they went on farther to speak of such a continual remembrance of the Lord's presence, such a continual working for Him, and to Him, as Rose felt she knew nothing of. Her conscience was awakened, and became very uneasy. She tried to quiet it by solemn resolutions of future improvement, and for the time she did succeed in restoring her usual self-complacency.

The next day was the one upon which Norah left Auchenbeith. It was a sad one for Margaret; and as the three girls went into Edinburgh with her, it was a day of bustle and excitement for all. When Rose

began, according to her resolution, to question herself in the evening, after Norah's plan, she found she could give but a poor account of herself. But she soon decided that such a bustling day was not a good one to begin upon, and with many well-formed resolutions about the morrow, she deferred beginning her self-examination until then.

All through the following day she was most watchful over herself, and often congratulated herself upon the satisfactory report she should have to give in at night. Industry at her studies, attention to her mother, patience, or at least, silence, under Jessie's teasing raillery, all seemed so fair and promising, that she longed for the appointed time to come, that she might enjoy her own self-satisfaction.

But when the final test was applied, when the searching question was put—"Have you done it as to the Lord?" Rose was alarmed at the result. Why had she been industrious? Why had she been patient? The answer to these and similar questions was,—Because it had suited her own taste, or because she wished to preserve her own self-respect.

As these answers pressed themselves upon her attention, words she often heard Margaret use, rose to her recollection—"Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," and she felt as she had never done before, that in nothing did she seek the glory of God, that His will was scarcely ever in her thoughts.

Vexed and alarmed, she gave up the self-examination, and went to bed, but not to sleep. It was in vain that she endeavoured to quiet her conscience, to soothe herself with the belief that she was not worse than others, that she was judging herself too severely, that one could not do all from great and high motives, that one could not always remember God's presence. This *all* and *always* could not comfort her. She could not fix upon one single deed through the whole day of which she could say, that she had done it to the glory of God, she could not remember one single thought of that God's presence, who had commanded her to set Him always before her.

Her sleepless night brought on a severe headache, and many remarks were made next morning about her looking pale and ill.

"Oh," said Jessie, in her heedless way, "you know there is fever in the village. You must have caught it in some of your peregrinations with Margaret."

Mrs. Cecil looked much alarmed at the mention of such a thing, and asked Rose innumerable questions about her feelings, and at last decided, much against Rose's inclinations, to send for Dr. Frazer.

"I have a great dread of infection," said Anna, as Mrs. Cecil was leaving the room to put this decision in practice.

"Well," cried Jessie lightly, "you and Mamma are much better than I am, and yet you are more afraid

of sickness and accidents, and all these things. I am not a bit afraid of death."

Mrs. Cecil was at the moment passing Jessie's chair. She paused, laid her hand upon her shoulder, and said impressively—

"Dear Jessie, you do not think of what you are saying. If you are really not afraid of death, is it not because you have never seriously thought upon the subject? Have you ever thought, my love, what it is to die, and what is to come after death?"

Jessie was too much surprised at her mother's unusual earnestness to speak, and Mrs. Cecil had left the room before she recovered herself.

"Well, I suppose, Mamma may be right," she said, with a forced laugh; "but who ever heard her speak in that way before?" And she found some pretext for going away immediately, as if afraid of continuing the conversation.

"What does Mamma mean, Margaret, or do you think that every one who thinks seriously of it is afraid of death?" asked Rose thoughtfully.

"I think she means that no one who thinks seriously of what death is, could speak of it in the way Jessie did."

"I have thought very seriously of it," continued Rose earnestly. "About two years ago I was very ill. I happened to hear the doctors tell Papa, that they did not think I could live many hours, and I quite believed them. I remember looking at the sun, and

saying, 'I shall never see you rise again;' and yet, Margaret, I was not at all afraid."

"But were you able to think of what comes after death, Rose? One can meet death without fear, if one can forget the judgment, if one can lose sight of eternity."

"But I did not, Margaret. I did not forget what was to come after. I was quite sensible, and thought of it all."

Margaret looked round the room. They were alone. Anna had followed Jessie, when she saw the turn the conversation was taking. She wished and expected Margaret to deal faithfully with Rose; and her expectation was not disappointed.

"Dear Rose," said Margaret, in a tone of deep feeling, "we can sometimes look forward to judgment and eternity without fear, because we have a vague feeling that it is impossible that *we* can be eternally lost. We fancy that we believe, that every one who keepeth not the whole law of God, that every one who has not kept it through every moment of his life, must be cursed in the sight of God; but it is quite a different thing to believe that *we* are thus cursed. We repeat with satisfaction the words—'The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God;' but we have a vague feeling that such can never be our own fate, even although we know that we forget God."

"Margaret," cried Rose with great energy, "you say *we*, but you mean *you;* you think that I have this vague

feeling that I cannot be lost, and you think that I have nothing else to trust to."

Margaret paused for several minutes before she spoke. She covered her eyes with her hand, and Rose could see her lips move. After a minute or two, she uncovered her eyes, and fixing them earnestly upon Rose, she said, with most affectionate earnestness—

"I don't know what to answer, dear Rose. I have been praying to God to give me wisdom to speak. It seems so hard to say 'Yes' to your question, and yet, Rose, I cannot say 'No.' Dear, dear Rose, ask yourself upon what other ground your hope is fixed. You will at once say, upon Christ's death for sinners. And were I to ask you if you had accepted Christ for your Saviour, you would also immediately say that you had. But, before you ask yourself whether this be really so or not, think first what it is to believe on Christ as your Saviour. It is to believe that He bore the whole punishment of your sins in your stead; and think what this punishment must have been, when it was an equivalent for your eternal misery. Weigh well the meaning of that word 'eternal.' And then ask yourself, what you think of Christ?—how you feel towards Him? Is your love to Him, your gratitude, your delight in His presence, your desire for His glory, what it would be, must be, if you really believed this? Have you ever seriously thought of that freedom from the power of sin, which the Lord gives to all whom He frees from its punishment? Do you know anything

of that freedom? Have you ever sought the new heart without which Christ himself says you cannot be saved? Have you received that holiness without which no man can see the Lord? Do not answer me, Rose. Answer yourself. And, oh dear, dear Rose, pray to God to make you answer sincerely."

It was a well-timed word. Coming as it did immediately after Rose's mind had been for the first time aroused to see her own failings, it carried conviction to her heart. She had been forced the night before to acknowledge that day passed after day without one serious thought of God, without one recollection of His presence. And she felt this could not be the case did she really believe on Christ. How could she love a Saviour of whom she never thought?

For several days she tried to go on as she used to do, only being more scrupulously careful in the performance of every duty. But it would not do. New duties were continually presenting themselves before her, duties of which she had never thought, and which she found she could not perform. And even when her outward conduct seemed most perfect, there were thoughts and feelings which must, but could not, be put away, there were thoughts and feelings which must, but could not, be brought in. And then came Margaret's question—"Do you believe that if you keep not the law in all things, you must be cursed?" and she felt that belief was every day growing stronger, while every day showed her more clearly that she had

no living faith in that Saviour who alone could redeem her from the curse.

For a long time, for months, she avoided speaking to Margaret. She could not bear that she should know the miserable state of her mind. But at last she became too unhappy to care for anything but her own misery. She sought Margaret, and told her fully all she felt, all she feared.

I think you know Margaret too well by this time not to be able to conceive her joy at this communication. Earnestly and affectionately she set before her the only remedy, and assured her, from the Lord's own Word, of His willingness to receive her and to supply all her need. Rose urged the want of love, the want of desire even to love, which Margaret had first awakened her to see. Margaret only repeated—

"He will supply all your need. He will give you all you require; a sense of sin, a hatred of sin, a belief in your own lost condition, a belief in His perfect power and willingness to save. He will empty you of all self-confidence, of all trust in your own righteousness, in order that He may fill you with His grace, and may clothe you with His righteousness."

Several more months passed before Rose could fully understand, or receive this doctrine. Again and again did she return to her old self-confidence, again and again did she endeavour to amend herself by her own efforts. But she never returned to her old self-complacency, never again believed that there was nothing

to amend. She laboured hard and long to make herself believe, to get for herself a new heart, but she never again lost the consciousness of her own want of faith, or her belief that the new heart was absolutely necessary.

Margaret's patience, kindness, and gentleness continued undiminished; during all that time, she bore with her, was ever ready to comfort and encourage her, or, when necessary, faithfully and unsparingly to admonish and warn her. And in the end she was rewarded. The Lord led Rose at last to yield herself wholly to Him, to be saved and to be sanctified by Him.

As might be expected, Rose's whole character was softened and improved by this change of heart. She no longer provoked the others by her assumption of superiority, and by her unyielding self-will. And as she became more yielding, more humble, Margaret saw with pleasure that Jessie grew more and more ashamed of her thoughtlessness, more and more anxious to improve. It had been Rose's constant rebukes which had taught her to seem indifferent to all reproof, and had made her so anxious to discover and to proclaim Rose's defects.

And now I am afraid my young readers must be tired of reading Margaret's history. At all events, I am tired of writing it, and mean to say no more. You will all easily believe that her task was more easy and pleasant as she went on, and saw her young pupils im-

proving under her tuition. And I daresay you will know that she became more useful to the whole family, and more beloved by them every year she passed among them. But these years were not very many after all. Before Jessie was quite old enough to do without the aid of a governess, Margaret had a house of her own, and, as an old friend used to say, a husband into the bargain.

I do not mean to tell you anything more about this important personage, for I never saw him, and so cannot describe him either personally or mentally. All I know is, that when he took Margaret to France to see Norah, Norah pronounced that she was quite satisfied that he was quite worthy of her dear child. And with that sentence I think you may be well satisfied also.

Margaret's new home was in the neighbourhood of London, near her old friend Mrs. Blake. The friendship begun between them in the quiet valley of the Pyrenees continued undiminished throughout their lives. And Mrs. Blake rejoiced to see her old favourite as a wife, mother, and mistress, practising those principles and habits she had watched her learning in the humble cottage of Philippe, the French peasant.

And now some of my readers may be saying—"Well, I am disappointed in the end of your story. From the account you gave of Margaret's early life I had expected that she would be called upon to do some great

work, to encounter great difficulties, to pass through great struggles and trials, and finally to be crowned with triumphant success in some great undertaking."

And I believe it is natural you should think so; as I have already shown you, Margaret herself had at one time the same feeling. But she has long ere this altered her opinion. And, perhaps, could you accompany her in her visits to the different homes of her former pupils, and see the improvement in their characters which she, under God, had been the principal means of effecting, you might change yours too.

Could you see the disagreeable, self-conceited, self-seeking Rose, changed into the active, managing, perhaps *too* managing, but still kindly, pleasant mistress of a large establishment, the pride and comfort of her sensible, good-tempered husband, surrounded by a numerous family of happy, well-trained, well-educated children, and a goodly train of orderly, contented servants; directing with prudence and diligence all the affairs of her household, attending with scrupulous exactness and kindness to the wants and claims of all dependent upon her, and ever ready and eager to help in any way she can any one within or without her own peculiar sphere, who may require her help:

Could you see the fretful, desponding Anna, changed into the quietly happy, the modestly useful, wife of a devoted country clergyman, labouring in all Christian love and meekness for the temporal and spiritual welfare of every one she meets with, and beloved and re-

spected by almost every member of her husband's parish, old and young, rich and poor:

Could you see the giddy, thoughtless Jessie, changed into the tender, careful nurse of her mother's declining years, the sprightly, entertaining companion of her father, during the long winter evenings, when that large house at Auchenbeith is apt to look dreary and empty now that so many of its inhabitants are gone, and the tender and judicious, yes, judicious guardian and instructress of her widowed brother Henry's motherless girls:

Could you, I say, see all this, you might, with Margaret, confess that her work had been sufficiently important, her reward exceedingly abundant.

And after all, what greater or nobler occupation can any human being desire than to do heartily, humbly, and cheerfully, exactly what the Lord calls us to do? whether it be to face grievous toil, hardship, danger, and death for His sake, in His cause; or to lie patiently and quietly on the bed of languor and sickness, content, if He so will it, to pass month after month, year after year, of a seemingly idle, useless life, a source of anxiety and trouble to those we love best.

These are the extremes. But between them lie an endless variety of spheres of labour and of trial, all which may be met and borne in the Lord's strength and for His sake. Some in their own nature seeming great and noble, even in the eyes of the most light-thinking; others capable of being made so by the spirit in which

they are undertaken; but each and all appointed by the Lord, and to be wrought out to Him. Some of extraordinary difficulty and danger, others wearisome and difficult from their very easiness and apparent insignificance; but each and all to be cheerfully gone about in the spirit of faith, believing that in the Lord's strength, "We can, because we ought." Some in which success is rarely, perhaps never, attained; others where the success, though complete, is of such a trifling kind as to seem scarcely worth the effort. But under each and all lies this comfort, that we are to do what we can, and that the result is in the Lord's hands.

THE END.

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